

# **Wake County Public School System Student Assignment Plan Implementation Year 2012-13**

## **Wake County Public School System Student Assignment Task Force**

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Board Members and Wake County Citizens,

After seven months of dedicated research and work, the student assignment task force has established a feasible and acceptable plan for the Wake County community. This plan provides what our parents have requested: proximity schools coupled with choice, stability and predictability via feeder patterns, and a focus on student achievement.

### Growth

The current node-based assignment plan could not, and cannot, provide parents stability in the face of explosive growth.

The Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) has been adding thousands of students every year because of the attractiveness of our community and the quality of our schools. This demand will require 2-3 new schools every single year, requiring thousands of mandatory reassignments each year if we were to continue to operate under the old assignment plan. While growth is healthy for a school system, it creates challenges for student assignment. Today we have more than 146,000 students in 165 schools. In ten years, we will be approaching 200,000 students in roughly 195 schools.

In the last five years, the system reassigned an average of 7,000 students with another 5,600 requesting transfers each year. Some neighborhoods were reassigned multiple times. Frustration led to a call for community based schools in parts of the county. Projecting forward to the 200,000-student population number, we would anticipate at least another 70,000 students mandatorily reassigned and 56,000 transfer requests under the old assignment plan. The majority of students and families would be affected.

We can, and must, provide a better way.

### Process

Our process was strong.

To ensure this plan reflects the broad desires of the County and captures national best practices in assignment policies, we studied 22 school districts; held 20 staff information sessions for the public; conducted a choice plan “test drive” with over 21,000 Wake County participants; considered over 4,000 comments; and provided multiple updates to the board during the past seven months.

We have been exceptionally thorough.

### Magnet Programs

Importantly, we leave unchanged the current magnet program. We keep intact the core of former Wake County superintendent Dr. Walter Marks’ 28-school magnet program, which he introduced and received board approval for in just seven weeks in his Schools of Choice program between January 15, 1982 and the Board vote on March 11, 1982.

We believe the Wake County Student Assignment Plan is equally visionary in that it provides students the opportunity to attend schools closer to their homes, while also mitigating the spread of high poverty schools. The plan also provides three unique additions with Hilburn Drive’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century K-8 Campus and the Boys and Girls Leadership Academies.

## The Bottom Line

The following are the key points parents need to know about this proposal:

1. School choices and priorities are based on your specific address and you have priority to your most proximate schools.
2. Achievement is enhanced through innovative programming and excellent, attractive choices for all students.
3. The magnet schools remain in their current state and thereby help mitigate the spread of high poverty schools.
4. If you like the school you are in, you can stay and keep your current transportation arrangement.
5. If you choose to stay in that school, you can enjoy the feeder pattern it provides, even if it is not on your choice list.
6. If you choose to stay in that school but want a different school at the next level or next year, you can choose from your list of schools.
7. If your child is moving from one school level to the next, you can stay within the feeder pattern of the school your child was in, or you can choose a different school from your list based upon available seats and your priority.
8. If you enter the choice process, you do not give up what you already have until you receive your new choice.
9. If your elementary feeder pattern takes you away from your most proximate high school, you still have the highest priority for placement, other than sibling priority, in your most proximate high school.
10. If you are in a magnet program, you may either follow that program feeder pattern or have highest priority on your most proximate school's feeder pattern.
11. If you are in private, charter, or home school and live in Wake County, you enjoy the same proximity priority as your neighbor who has children in the public schools.
12. If you live near a magnet school whose primary purpose is to avoid high poverty schools (Brentwood, Bugg, Fuller, Hunter, Millbrook, Poe, Powell or Washington), you have at least eight elementary choices and at least two of those choices are schools that have demonstrated high performance and growth at all student levels.

This is a strong plan that provides stability, proximity, achievement, and choice options for all Wake County families. We will make it stronger with an annual assessment program that will reflect the same intensive listening that helped craft this proposal.

Our commitment to the community is to continue to listen, learn and provide quality school choices so all Wake County children have access to a world class, 21<sup>st</sup> Century education.

Anthony J. Tata

Superintendent

Wake County Public School System

## **Background**

In March of 2011, Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) Superintendent Anthony J. Tata assembled a group of WCPSS staff members to create a new student assignment plan for the district. This plan was to be based on School Board Policy 6200 (Appendix A), which was revised in May of 2010, in part as a result of community frustrations over the frequency of school reassignments in recent years as the school district underwent a period of rapid growth. The charge to the task force was to create a new student assignment system that was consistent with Board Policy, which addressed community concerns, and which rested on the four “pillars” of achievement, choice, proximity, and stability.

Research. The task force began working in March 2011 by researching numerous school districts around the country. Districts were selected to represent a variety of student assignment methodologies, with a particular focus on larger districts. In all, the task force reviewed student assignment policies and documentation from 22 different school districts (Table 1) and gathered other data via conference calls, newspaper articles, research studies, and other sources in an effort to figure out what benefits and challenges were inherent in the different methods used by those districts to assign students to schools. The task force also developed a number of facts and assumptions that were used to guide their work, including lessons learned from other school systems with regard to choice assignment systems (Appendix B). The task force also examined a wide range of empirical studies and other literature on the relationship between student assignment and important educational outcomes (Appendix C). Taken together, these data sources served as the foundation for the work of the task force.

Table 1

School Districts Studied by Task Force

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Baltimore County Public Schools, MD    | Hillsborough Public Schools, FL           |
| Berkeley Unified School District, CA   | Houston Independent School District, TX   |
| Boston Public Schools, MA              | Jefferson County Public Schools, KY       |
| Broward County Public Schools, FL      | Lee County Public Schools, FL             |
| Cambridge Public Schools, MA           | Long Beach Unified School District, CA    |
| Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC      | Los Angeles Unified School District, CA   |
| Clark County School District, NV       | Montgomery County Public Schools, MD      |
| Dallas Independent School District, TX | Pinellas County Schools, FL               |
| Fairfax County Public Schools, VA      | Pitt County Schools, NC                   |
| Guilford County Schools, NC            | San Francisco Unified School District, CA |
| Gwinnett County Public Schools, GA     | Seattle Public Schools, WA                |

Initial Courses of Action. Based on the review of student assignment practices across the country and research related to student assignment, the task force developed nine separate student assignment scenarios (i.e., courses of action) representing a wide continuum of options in terms of choice, stability, proximity/neighborhood continuity, and student demographic/achievement balance. In the task force’s review of school systems around the country, one of the major distinguishing characteristics of the different assignment systems was whether students were assigned to a single school based on their residence (a.k.a., a “base” assignment plan), or were given a slate of schools from which to select (a.k.a., a “choice” plan). As a result, some courses of action developed by the task force proposed to assign each student to a specific school based on her/his residence, whereas others allowed families to choose from multiple schools for their children to attend. Those nine courses of action were then evaluated against a list of specific criteria based on WCPSS Board Policy 6200 (Table 2).

Table 2

Criteria for Evaluating Courses of Action

| <b>Criteria</b>  | <b>Description</b>   |
|--|--|
| Achieving Academic Success for ALL Children  | The level to which student achievement is considered in assignment   |
| Distance   | Consideration of proximity to residence  |
| Distance - Transportation Utilization  | Transportation utilization based on travel time  |
| Choice - Includes Calendar and Magnet Programs   | The amount of choice offered by the plan   |
| Stability of Assignment - School Assignment  | Frequency of school assignment changes   |
| Stability of Assignment - Grandfathering   | Students allowed to remain at their current school (with or without transportation)  |
| Facility Utilization - Temporary Classrooms  | Use of mobile or modular units   |
| Facility Utilization - Crowding/capacity   | Efficient use of school facilities based on site capacity  |
| Facility Utilization - Elasticity  | The ability to respond as population grows or declines   |
| Grade Structure  | The manner in which grade levels are configured in a school (e.g. K-5, 6-8, 9-12)  |
| Grade Structure - Logical Feeder Patterns  | The progression a student will follow from elementary to middle to high school   |
| Alignment with Magnet Schools Program  | Reduce high concentrations of poverty and support diverse populations  |
| Alignment with Magnet Schools Program  | Provide expanded educational opportunities   |
| Students with Higher Needs - Accommodations including Limited English Proficient (LEP), requiring services from Special Education Programs | Understanding that each qualified student's needs are met by individual schools, this criterion refers to enhancements and/or changes in student placement based upon these accommodations   |
| Students with Higher Needs - Achievement Factor  | The degree to which students are placed with high-performing teachers  |
| System Turbulence  | The level to which the WCPSS will experience changes to policies, procedures and practices   |
| Student Displacement   | The level to which students will be moved among schools based on course of action implementation   |
| Acceptability  | A plan is acceptable if it meets the criteria of Board Policy 6200 and meets the overall perceived needs of the community as defined by the Superintendent's listening tour. (Focus on student achievement, stability, community schools, and diversity) |
| Feasibility  | A plan is feasible if the school system is fiscally and logistically capable of implementing the plan.   |

After evaluating the nine possible courses of action against these criteria, the task force narrowed those nine down to four possible courses of action that could serve as the basis for a new student assignment plan. Those four courses of action were presented to various stakeholders, including school board members, central services staff, principals, teachers, and parents. These briefing sessions were used to determine the perceived strengths and weaknesses of each course of action from each stakeholder group's perspective. This feedback was then used to further refine each option. The briefing sessions with stakeholder groups also served to make the process as transparent as possible, thereby engaging the community during the development phase so their input could be utilized effectively in the creation of the final plan.

This analysis led the task force to further narrow down the four courses of action into two, labeled "Blue" and "Green". The Blue Course of Action was a *controlled choice* assignment plan (see Willie, Edwards, & Alves, 2002 for a discussion of controlled choice) in which families would be able to rank-order their choices from among a set of schools for their children to attend, with assignments made based on certain criteria set by the district including sibling priority, proximity, achievement, and available capacity at the school. The Green Course of Action was a base assignment plan similar to the current WCPSS student assignment plan, but with a number of modifications in the areas of grandfathering, transfer policies and node reassignment procedures which were intended to address many of the concerns which led to the revision of the student assignment policy in 2010.

In late May, these two courses of action were then presented to the larger community. A website was created (<http://assignment.wcpss.net>) to share the details with the public, along with the process undertaken by the task force to date. The public was encouraged to examine the information on the website and submit comments and feedback. Public input sessions were also held at 10 high schools. Between these sessions and the website, over 2,300 comments and questions were submitted (Table 3). These comments were reviewed by the task force and shared with school board members.

Table 3

Spring 2011 Community Feedback via Website and Public Input Sessions

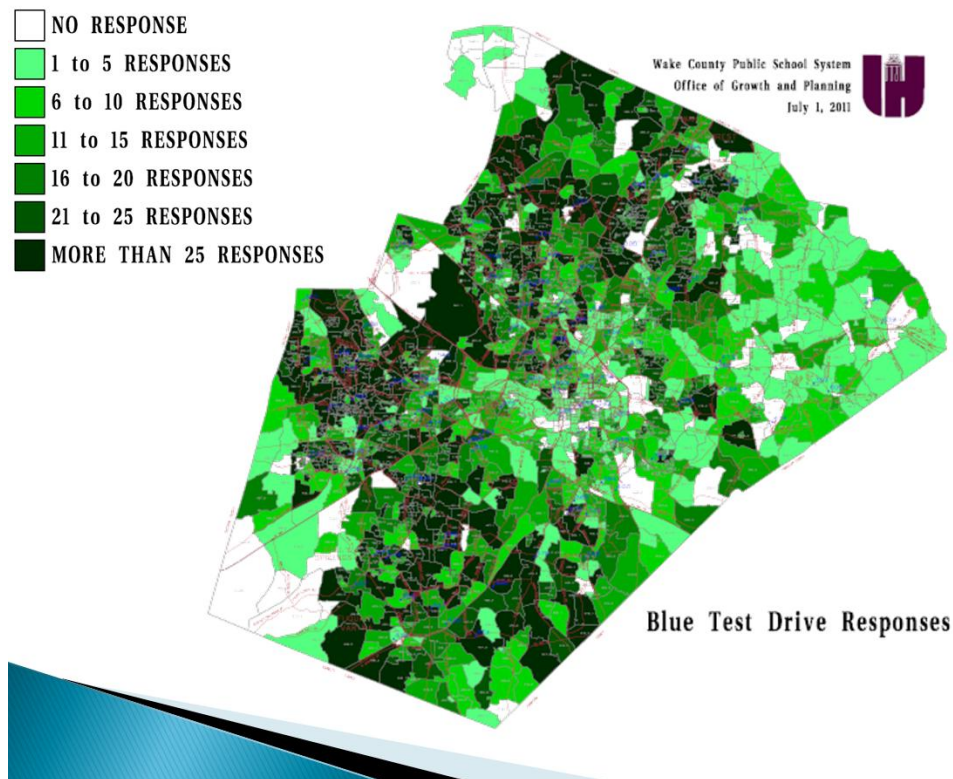
| <b>Date</b> | <b>Location</b>           | <b>Questions</b> |
|-------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 5/31/2011   | Enloe HS                  | 37               |
| 5/31/2011   | Athens Drive HS           | 45               |
| 5/31/2011   | Millbrook HS              | 41               |
| 6/1/2011    | Panther Creek HS          | 50               |
| 6/1/2011    | Knightdale HS             | 18               |
| 6/2/2011    | Wake Forest-Rolesville HS | 26               |
| 6/2/2011    | Cary HS                   | 26               |
| 6/2/2011    | Sanderson HS              | 35               |
| 6/2/2011    | Garner HS                 | 21               |
| 6/2/2011    | Holly Springs HS          | 38               |
|             | Total                     | 337              |
|             |                           |                  |
|             | Online Comments/Questions | 1,968            |
|             | <b>Grand Total</b>        | <b>2,305</b>     |

Choice Plan Simulation. As feedback was being gathered on the Blue and Green Courses of Action, it became apparent that further data were needed to help move the process forward. Since the Blue Course of Action represented such a significant departure from current assignment practice, a county-wide simulation of a school selection process was undertaken. The purpose of the simulation was to gather additional data that would help illuminate several of the more complex elements of the Blue Course of Action should the district decide to pursue a choice-based method of assignment going forward.

In June 2011, simulated school choice selection results were gathered from over 13,000 households representing over 21,000 students to provide data on how WCPSS parents might select schools under such conditions. Participation was widespread from throughout the county, with the density of participation varying to some degree across different areas of the county (Figure 2).

Figure 2

June 2011 Choice Simulation Participation by Node



The results of the simulation suggested that a controlled choice assignment plan could be utilized to address achievement, stability, choice, and proximity in WCPSS. Several additional findings from the simulation study also served to inform further refinement of a possible choice plan, including:

- Proximity and school calendar were significant factors in how participants ranked their choices
- High-performing schools were not a significant factor in the ranking of choices
- Established K-12 feeder patterns were desired
- Current magnet options remained desirable
- Significant outreach efforts would be needed in many parts of the county should a choice plan be implemented
- Choice lists would need to be expanded for students in many areas of the county

- Some schools appeared on choice lists for too many students, and others appeared on choice lists for too few students

Maturation of the Choice Plan. After the simulation results were reported and reviewed by staff and the school board, the preponderance of community feedback as well as the results of the four-month planning process all suggested that a controlled choice model like the Blue Course of Action offered the best option for the district overall. Feedback indicated that mandatory reassignments and instability needed to be addressed in the new plan. It was also clear that parents valued having choices, particularly proximate choices near home, and that a plan that provided choice while also handling growth without mandatory reassignment provided the best option going forward. The proposed new WCPSS Student Assignment Plan is therefore a choice-based plan which most closely resembles the Blue Course of Action initially developed in Spring 2011, with the addition of various elements of the Green Course of Action. Popular aspects of the Green Course of Action (e.g., more liberal transfer processes, attention to historical feeder patterns, better calendar alignment, etc.) were incorporated into the Blue Course of Action to form the new plan, and the process then went forward.

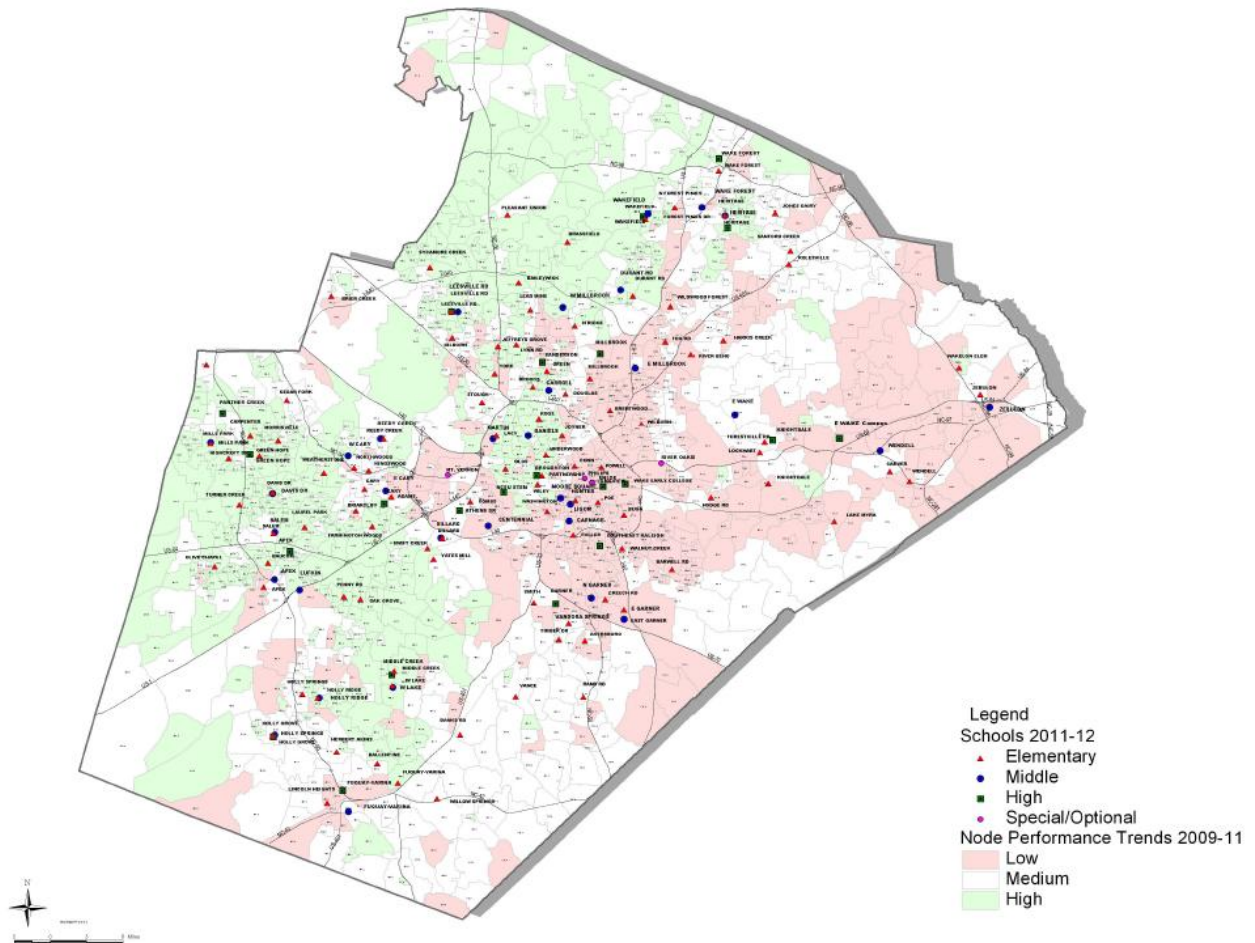
As it was originally conceived, the Blue Course of Action called for a central “magnet zone” in the center of the county. Students living outside this area would be allowed to choose from either a set of schools near their home, or a full complement of magnet programs within the magnet zone. Similarly, students living in the magnet zone would be allowed to choose from a number of nearby magnets and also a selection of non-magnet schools outside the magnet zone, including year-round schools and high-performing schools.

The proposal of a central magnet zone in the original Blue Course of Action would have required the removal of magnet programs from some schools outside the zone and relocating those programs in new locations. The purpose of these changes was to more closely align the location of magnet programs with the neighborhoods in the county that were demonstrating lower student achievement over time

(Figure 1). Given the importance of proximity in Policy 6200, these magnet program placements were intended to help prevent the spread of racially, economically and/or educationally isolated schools in locations which, if filled entirely by proximity students, would likely become isolated along those lines.

Figure 1

Three-Year Student Performance Trends by Node, 2009-2011



As feedback was gathered throughout the Spring of 2011, however, the decision was made to not move magnet programs because of the significant disruption it would cause. Families who currently enjoy magnet programs in some schools would potentially have to change schools in order to maintain their access to those programs. The financial ramifications of moving a program from one school to

another were also considered to be a significant barrier. The eventual maturation of the Blue Course of Action that was presented to the community for review in May 2011 can be found at <http://assignment.wcpss.net/under-consideration/blue/>. That document also contains additional details, many of which persist in the final draft plan.

Additional feedback was provided on an ongoing basis throughout the Summer of 2011 from board members, community members, and other stakeholders. Periodic presentations were made at board work sessions throughout the summer to provide updates on progress and future timelines. A new round of public input sessions, along with a re-launch of the comment submission process via the website resulted in over 1,700 additional comments and questions from community members (Table 4). This feedback led the task force to continue developing and refining a controlled choice model that would fit the district’s needs going forward. Table 5 provides a timeline and major milestones in the task force’s work from its inception through the final approval process, which is currently slated for the Fall of 2011.

Table 4

Summer 2011 Community Feedback via Website and Public Input Sessions

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Location</b>             | <b>Questions</b> |
|-------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 8/31/2011   | Middle Creek HS             | 52               |
| 9/1/2011    | Wakefield HS                | 111              |
| 9/7/2011    | Apex HS                     | 140              |
| 9/8/2011    | Southeast Raleigh Magnet HS | 25               |
| 9/13/2011   | Broughton HS                | 162              |
| 9/14/2011   | Sanderson HS                | 231              |
| 9/15/2011   | East Wake HS                | 17               |
| 9/19/2011   | Millbrook Magnet HS         | 124              |
| 9/21/2011   | Brier Creek ES              | 30               |
| 9/28/2011   | Jeffreys Grove ES           | 12               |
|             | Total                       | 904              |
|             |                             |                  |
| 9/30/2011   | Online Comments/Questions   | 835              |
|             | <b>Grand Total</b>          | <b>1,739</b>     |

Table 5

Student Assignment Task Force Work Timeline

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| Task Force assembled  | March 4, 2011          |
| Task Force began work   | March 7, 2011          |
| Researched 22 school districts  | March 2011             |
| Developed 9 courses of action   | April 2011             |
| Stakeholder feedback collected  | April-May 2011         |
| Narrowed to 2 courses of action   | May 2011               |
| Public website launch and community feedback  | May 23, 2011           |
| Online choice plan simulation   | June 13-24, 2011       |
| Simulation data analysis  | June 2011              |
| Additional school board updates and community feedback                                      | June-August 2011       |
| Finalization of new draft WCPSS Student Assignment Plan                                     | September 2011         |
| Anticipated school board approval of new WCPSS Student Assignment Plan beginning in 2012-13 | September-October 2011 |

The remainder of this document details the elements of the proposed new WCPSS Student Assignment Plan as recommended by the Student Assignment Task Force.

## **Structure of the Plan**

The new WCPSS Student Assignment Plan is a controlled choice model with access to a full set of magnet schools. As in the current WCPSS plan, parents have traditional, year round, and magnet options. However, this plan replaces the concept of a single base school with a broader list of schools from which families can choose based on their preferences. The plan gives all families access to schools proximate to their homes, schools with various calendar types, and magnet school programs. The plan also includes the option of “high-performing”<sup>1</sup> schools on each family’s choice list.

The choice process will be available to all families new to WCPSS and any current WCPSS families who want to move to a different school. Students already enrolled in WCPSS do not have to participate in the choice process; they can simply stay where they are if they are happy with their current school assignment. During the choice process, parents will be provided a set of school choices (including year-round and traditional calendar) that are proximate to their residence as well as a comprehensive set of magnet schools. Parents then rank schools on their choice list.

The choice process will begin with the Kindergarten class in 2012-13. All families with rising Kindergarten students will participate in the choice process each year, with a clear path to middle and high school based on the feeder patterns associated with each elementary school. All current WCPSS families in grades 1-12 who are happy with their current school assignment can choose to be “grandfathered” at their current school and maintain their current transportation. Families of students in grades 1-12 wishing to change their current school assignment may also participate in the choice process by requesting a seat at one of the schools on their choice list based on available seats. Again, there is no requirement for students in grades 1-12 to participate. If they are happy where they are, they can simply stay in their current school and continue following the feeder pattern.

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<sup>1</sup> A description of a “high-performing” school is provided in Appendix D.

## **Enrollment Process**

New enrollments for students not currently attending a WCPSS school will be processed at local schools or at the Central Services building. Parents/custodians will need to bring the required enrollment documents per Board Policy 6200 and 6201 (e.g., student's birth certificate, photo ID of parent/custodian, proof of residence in Wake County, etc.) to enroll their children. WCPSS staff will verify the student's eligibility for enrollment and guide the parent/custodian through the enrollment and choice selection process. Staff will make available to the parent information regarding the schools on their choice list, and instruct the parent as to how to participate in the appropriate choice selection processes for their student.. Parents of continuing students will be informed regarding choice selection processes each year through their assigned school via announcements, flyers in backpacks, phone messages, school guidance counselors, etc.

Rules and Procedures. The following enrollment procedures will be adopted beginning with the 2012-13 school year. Families can enroll new students at any school, the Office of Student Assignment or the Center for International Enrollment, but are encouraged to enroll their student at one of the choice schools for their address. In general, the staff at the site will be responsible for collecting initial enrollment documentation, creating the NCWISE record, creating the student's cumulative folder and following up with families to give them the student's NCWISE number and assist them with the completion of their choice application. In addition:

- The Office of Student Assignment will send an Initial Notice of School Assignment to all existing students each November. This notice will include transportation information for the next school year and feeder pattern/transportation information. These initial assignments will grandfather all existing students, assign rising sixth and ninth grade siblings to the middle school or high school of their older sibling, assign rising sixth graders at Hilburn Elementary to Hilburn Middle, and assign all other rising sixth and ninth grade students to their feeder pattern school. The Initial Notice of School Assignment will be a reminder to parents that if this assignment is what they

want, there is no need for them to participate in the choice application processes in the winter and spring. Along with the Initial Notice of School Assignment, information on the magnet and choice processes will be provided.

- Parents will have access to an “Address Finder” on the website, to locate their school choices. They may also call or visit any school, call or visit the Office of Student Assignment or Customer Service for this information.
- Parents may go to any school with their enrollment documents (birth certificate, current proof of residence, and parent photo ID) to enroll and receive their student’s NCWISE number. If a parent has children in different grade spans (i.e. elementary and high) then they must go to a school on each level. Parents can also go to the Office of Student Assignment or the Center for International Enrollment to take their enrollment documents (birth certificate, current proof of residence, and parent photo ID), enroll and receive their student’s NCWISE number.
- Wherever a parent goes to enroll their child, this location becomes their “Enrollment School”. Enrollment School personnel will also be responsible to insure that preschool students currently at their school participate in the choice application.
- Enrollment School personnel will make copies of documents and create the student’s cumulative folder. Enrollment School personnel will also create the student’s record in NCWISE. NCWISE will then assign the student electronically to a temporary “holding” school where the student’s information will reside until they participate in the choice selection process.
- Enrollment School personnel will give all new parents materials regarding the magnet selection process and the base choice selection process for school assignment.
- Enrollment School personnel will assist parents with online magnet and/or base choice selections and have computers available for parent use.
- Enrollment School staff will forward cumulative folders to the assigned school within a designated time period after each round of choice selection.

- Enrollment School staff will have the ability to “look up” student applications during Round 1 and Round 2 to determine if their enrolled families have completed their choice application. The Enrollment School staff will be responsible for making every effort (including phone calls, mailings, emails, and home visits) to contact their families to complete their choice application before each application period closes.
- At the end of Round 1 of the base school choice selection process, the Office of Student Assignment will mail letters to all enrolled students who did not complete a choice application in Round 1, reminding them of the necessity to complete a choice application. Enrollment school staff will continue to make every effort to contact their families and assist with completing the choice application. If these efforts are unsuccessful, staff will consider placement in a regional choice school<sup>2</sup> for those students living closest to Group 1 magnets. Staff will closely monitor potential demand and capacity at all regional choice options throughout this process.
- At the end of Round 2, the Office of Student Assignment will assign any student who remains in the temporary/holding school and did not participate in choice selection in a school according to the priorities and procedures of the choice selection process. An Official Notice of School Assignment will be mailed to these parents at this time.
- The Office of Student Assignment will send application results and assignment notices to all families who participate in each of the selection processes immediately after the close of the application period. This includes the magnet selection, Choice Round 1, and Choice Round 2.
- The Office of Student Assignment will send the Official Notice of School Assignment to all students assigned for the upcoming school year each May. Once the official notice of assignment has been made, the Open/Walk-in Enrollment and Transfer/Hardship processes will begin.
- The enrollment process will continue to be revised and adjusted as needed to ensure the effective and efficient enrollment of our students.

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<sup>2</sup> See page 22 for a description of regional choice schools.

## **Base School Choices**

Families will have access to a set of “base school choices” based on their node of residence. Each node will have at least five elementary school choices and their associated middle and high school choices on their base school choice list. These lists will be determined based on the proximity of the elementary schools to the center of the node of residence. While the node will be used to determine the school choices for each family, proximity priorities in the selection process (discussed on page 26) will be based on individual addresses. Each school will be part of a defined feeder pattern that will provide parents and students with a predictable, stable path through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

## **Magnet School Choices**

In addition to these base school choices, families will also have continued access to a full complement of magnet programs as they have in the past. To ensure equitable access to magnet programs for all students regardless of residence, a set percentage of magnet school seats will be reserved for students who do live in close proximity to magnet schools, while the remaining seats will be available for students who live in other parts of the county. As with the base school options, magnet schools will also be part of a defined feeder pattern that will provide parents and students with a predictable, stable path through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

To standardize the seat allocations in magnet schools, the 20 current magnet elementary schools have been classified into three groups. These groupings reflect the three primary purposes of the magnet program in WCPSS. Group 1 magnets are defined as those magnets located in historically lower-performing and/or higher-poverty areas of the county<sup>3</sup>. Group 2 magnets are those located in areas of the county where they compete with charter and private schools. Group 3 magnets are located in areas outside of the Raleigh area, and are designed to bring specialized programming to those areas of the

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<sup>3</sup> These characterizations do not necessarily apply to individual students; rather, they are related to the overall historical data for the area.

county. As such, the proportions of proximity and magnet seats in those schools are allocated to reflect those differing purposes (Table 6).

Table 6  
Elementary Magnet School Group Designations

| Group 1<br>(40-45% Proximity Seats) | Group 2<br>(55-60% Proximity Seats) | Group 3<br>(10-20% Proximity Seats) |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Brentwood                           | Brooks                              | Farmington Woods                    |
| Bugg                                | Combs                               | Smith                               |
| Fuller                              | Conn                                | Wendell                             |
| Hunter                              | Douglas                             | Zebulon                             |
| Millbrook                           | Joyner                              |                                     |
| Poe                                 | Underwood                           |                                     |
| Powell                              | Wiley                               |                                     |
| Washington                          |                                     |                                     |

NOTE: District-wide application schools (such as Partnership Elementary, Wake Early College, etc.) are not considered magnet schools for purposes of seat allocation.

Students who have magnet schools on their base school choice list because those schools are closest to their residence will have access to the proximity seats in those schools, while students from other areas of the district for whom those schools are on their magnet school list will have access to the magnet (i.e., non-proximity) seats. In the event that these proximity and non-proximity school seat allocations are not completely filled during the magnet selection process, those allocations will remain in place to accommodate students who enter the system between the end of the selection process and the opening of the school year. This will ensure that students who move into the district during the summer, as well as those who do not enroll until after school begins, have fair access to seats in the schools on

their choice lists. The maintenance of these allocations will be critical to assuring fair access to seats for students who are not able to participate in the selection process for whatever reason, and for ensuring that magnet schools do not become overly concentrated with students from historically high-poverty neighborhoods. They will also be critical to maintaining the capacity constraints that allow the feeder patterns to function properly such that seats can be guaranteed for all students throughout the K-12 span.

### **District-wide Application Schools**

Finally, in addition to base and magnet choices, families will have access to district-wide application schools (listed at the end of Appendix E). These schools will be available to all families in the district via an open application process. These schools will require completion of an application packet prior to the choice selection process. Students will need to meet the entrance requirements detailed in the application packet and be selected during the choice selection process in order to receive a seat at one of these schools.

### **Composition of School Choice Lists**

The list of school choices for each family will be created by node. In other words, each family within a given node will have the same list of schools from which to choose. The composition of these lists is designed to provide all families with equitable, viable, high-quality choices in all parts of the county. It is also based on parental choice patterns evidenced in the simulation study, with a focus on maximizing the likelihood that parents will have access to their top-choice schools as often as possible. In some locations of the county, there may be additional schools added to choice lists in order to ensure that all families have an equitable mixture of school choices, and to ensure that schools appear on enough lists that there will not be significantly under-enrolled schools in some parts of the county. The basic structure of the choice lists will be as follows:

- For families whose nearest elementary school is NOT a Group 1 magnet:

- At least five elementary schools such that the five closest elementary schools are included. Additional proximate choices will be added as necessary to ensure that each list has at least:
  - Two traditional calendar choices
  - Two year-round calendar choices
  - At least one elementary school defined as a "high performing" school<sup>4</sup>
  - At least two different middle schools and two different high schools in the available feeder patterns
- For families whose closest elementary school is a Group 1 magnet:
  - The two closest Group 1 magnets
  - One proximate Group 2 magnet
  - Three regional choices<sup>5</sup>
  - One proximate traditional non-magnet
  - One proximate year-round non-magnet
  - Plus all associated middle and high schools in those feeder patterns

### **Choice Selection Processes**

Participation in choice selection for currently enrolled WCPSS students is entirely optional. Currently registered students who are happy with their existing school assignment can simply continue in their current school. They will already have a seat in the feeder pattern through 12<sup>th</sup> grade; however, they also have the option of participating in the choice process each year if they so desire. Participation in the choice selection process for currently enrolled WCPSS students is a no-risk situation, as current students

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix D for information as to how these schools are defined.

<sup>5</sup> Regional choices will include year-round, traditional, high-performing, and under-enrolled schools.

will not be required to give up their current seat unless and until they are awarded a seat at a school they specifically request through the choice process.

The number of available seats for the choice process will vary each year by school and grade level. Since the assignment plan creates a guaranteed feeder pattern through 12<sup>th</sup> grade for each student, the majority of open seats each year will be Kindergarten seats. Currently enrolled students wishing to choose another school, as well as families enrolling in WCPSS for the first time, will participate in the choice process based on available seats at each school.

Students new to WCPSS as well as current WCPSS students will be able to participate in choice selection processes for both magnet schools and base schools. The choice selection processes will occur in four phases as follows: magnet selection, two rounds of base school selection, and open/walk-in enrollment. Each process is described in greater detail below.

Magnet Selection. Magnet selection will begin in December and run through early January each year. Participation in the magnet selection process is entirely optional for families, as it has been in the past. Families interested in participating in the magnet selection process will first need to ensure that their student is enrolled with WCPSS, as only enrolled students will be eligible to select schools. The magnet selection process will be a separate and distinct process from the base school choice selection process. Parents that participate in the magnet selection process will receive notification regarding selection results in late January. Students selected for a seat in a magnet school will be assigned to that magnet school for the following school year.

Students who participate in magnet selection but are not selected for a seat will have various options depending on their enrollment status. Existing WCPSS students who are not transitioning across grade spans (i.e., rising into grades 1-5, 7-8, and 10-12) who participate and are not selected for a magnet seat will be placed on a waiting list for the magnet schools they had requested, and will remain assigned to their current school for the following school year. These students may also participate in the base

school choice selection process if they wish, but are not required to do so since they are already assigned to a school.

Students new to WCPSS and existing students transitioning from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade who are not selected for a magnet seat will be placed on a waiting list for the magnet schools they had requested. Students new to WCPSS who are not selected for a magnet seat will need to participate in the base school choice selection process to receive a school assignment. Students transitioning from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade who are not selected for a magnet seat may either retain their established feeder pattern seat at the middle or high school in their current school's feeder pattern or they may participate in the base school choice selection process if they wish.

Base School Selection. After the magnet selection process has completed and participating families have been notified of the results, base school choice selection will occur in two rounds beginning in mid-January and ending in March. Families participating in the base school choice selection process will need to ensure that their student is enrolled with WCPSS, as only enrolled students will be eligible to submit base school choice applications. The base school choice selection process will occur after the magnet selection process. Base school choice selections will run in two separate rounds to ensure the greatest level of participation possible for enrolled students.

If a student was selected for a seat during the magnet selection process, they do not need to participate in the base choice selection process. *If a student selected for a magnet seat during magnet selection decides to participate in the base school choice selection process that same year, they will have to give up that magnet seat as a condition of participation.* This will prevent a single student from occupying two seats simultaneously and thereby maintain fairness in the process for all families. Any unfilled magnet seats left over from the magnet selection process will also be available during the base school choice selection rounds if families would like to select them at that time.

Parents will be notified of base school choice selection results within two weeks of the end of each round. Students who are selected for a seat in one of their base school choices will be assigned to

that school for the following year. Students who are not selected for their first-choice school will remain on the waiting list for that school.

Students who are transitioning across grade spans (i.e., from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade) and elect to participate in the base school selection process are not selected for a different school will be allowed to follow their existing feeder pattern into middle or high school. They will also be automatically placed on a waiting list for their first-choice school. Existing WCPSS students who are not transitioning across grade spans (i.e., rising into grades 1-5, 7-8, and 10-12) who elect to participate in the base choice selection process and are not selected for a different school will remain assigned to their current school for the following school year. They will also be placed on the waiting list for their first-choice school.

Students new to WCPSS who participate in the base choice process will be assigned to the highest-ranked school on their list if possible. If they are not able to be seated in their first-choice school for whatever reason, then they will be assigned to the highest-ranked remaining school on their list according to the selection priority criteria, and will be automatically placed on a waiting list for their first choice.

In all cases, in the event that a student is selected for a school other than their first choice, they will remain on the waiting list for their first-choice school.

Open/Walk-in Enrollment. Open/Walk-in Enrollment will occur on a daily basis as new students move into the district after the base school choice selection process has completed. This process will be separate and distinct from the magnet and school choice selection processes. This process will occur from the end of the final selection process throughout the school year to accommodate newcomers, and will allow newcomers to rank-order their preferences for the magnet and/or base school choices based on their residential address. This process will NOT be used by existing families seeking alternate school assignments; it is designed for newcomers needing an initial school assignment. During open/walk-in enrollment, families will be able to rank-order available magnet school choices and/or base school

choices based on their address. During this process, if a family wishes to rank a school that is at capacity as their first choice school, they will be placed at the bottom of the waiting list for their first choice school and be assigned to the next school ranked on their list with available capacity.

Non-Participants. It is likely that some families will not participate in one or more elements of the choice process for any number of reasons. If families of current WCPSS students do not participate in the choice process, they will simply stay where they are on their current feeder pattern. However, for students new to WCPSS who do not participate in the selection process, the following procedures will be followed:

- Families of newly-enrolled students who do not participate in the magnet selection process will be eligible to participate in the base school choice selection process, and will have access to available base school and magnet seats at that time.
- Families of newly-enrolled students who do not participate in either the magnet or base school choice selection processes will have access to available seats at their non-magnet and magnet choice list schools during Walk-in/Open Enrollment.
- Families of newly-enrolled students who do not participate in the selection processes and do not select a school during Open Enrollment will be assigned to a school from their choice list which still has available seats.
- Non-participating students with special needs who require attendance at a specific school to access a particular program will be guaranteed placement at that school.

Hardship/Transfer Request Process. The hardship/transfer request process will occur from the end of the final selection process for a period of 10 business days for existing/continuing students. Requests from newcomers will be accepted within ten days of their receiving notification of their school assignment from WCPSS. This process will be separate from the magnet, base school choice list

selection, and open/walk-in enrollment processes. This process is to be used by families wanting to request assignment to a school that is NOT on their magnet or base school choice list and would better meet the needs of a family; this process would align with Board Policy 6203.

Selection Priorities. Ideally, each student participating in the choice process will be provided with her/his first-choice school if possible, unless it cannot be accomplished due to the capacity limits of the school. Reports from other districts implementing controlled choice plans indicate that the vast majority of students will be placed in their first choice school. In the event that capacity limits make it impossible to give each student her/his first choice, however, the following selection priorities will be applied, in the prescribed order:

- **Priority 1:** Incoming siblings at grades K, 6, and 9 of current WCPSS students will be guaranteed placement at their sibling's school if they list it as their first choice
- **Priority 2:** Students who reside within 1.5 miles by driving distance of their first-choice school
- **Priority 3:** Students whose nearest school is more than 1.5 miles from their residence and who select that school as their first-choice school
- **Priority 4<sup>6</sup>:** Students rising into 6<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade that have attended a Group 2 or 3 magnet elementary or middle school as a proximity student whose first choice is the magnet middle or high school for their magnet program pathway
- **Priority 5:** Students residing in an historically low-performing area<sup>7</sup> whose first-choice school is designated as a regional school choice
- **Priority 6:** Students residing in an historically high-performing area whose first-choice school is a magnet school and/or is located in a low-performing area
- **Priority 7:** Students whose nearest school is severely overcrowded and select a school that is *not* overcrowded as their first choice

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<sup>6</sup> This priority is only used for rising 6th and rising 9th grade students participating in the choice selection process.

<sup>7</sup> Definitions of "low performing area" and "high performing area" are provided later in this document.

Before the selection process begins, each student will be assigned a random sequence number which will determine the order in which choice selections will be processed. To implement the selection priorities, each student's sequence number will then be increased by a set amount based on the priority categories that apply to that student for any given school. Once the selection priorities have been factored into each student's number, school assignments will be made beginning with the first-choice school for every student. The student with the highest priority number for her/his first-choice school will have her/his application processed first for that school, followed by the student with the second-highest priority for that school, etc. If necessary, this sequential priority process will then be applied to each student's second-choice school, third-choice school, fourth-choice school, etc. until each student has been placed in a school.

In order to implement the stated selection priorities for those schools that receive more applicants than they have available seats, definitions of certain terms have been created. A "low-performing area" (Selection Priorities 5 and 6) is defined as a node where the three-year average proficiency rate is in the bottom third of the district by rank order. A "high-performing area" is defined as a node where the three-year average proficiency rate is in the top third of the district by rank order. Proficiency rate averages will be based on all state tests taken by any student living in that node (i.e., EOG, EOC, Writing Test) over the past three years. This rank-ordering of nodes will be recalculated each year for selection priority purposes. For purposes of Selection Priority 7, an overcrowded school is defined as a school that is over 110% of capacity at the student's grade level.

Year-Round Track Assignments. Families who request assignment to a year-round school will also be asked to rank the desirability of each year-round track for assistance with track allocation after assignments have been made. Track preferences, however, will not be guaranteed other than the assurance that families with more than one student in a year-round school will be guaranteed track continuity within the family.

Waiting Lists. The creation, maintenance and use of waiting lists is essential in a controlled choice student assignment plan. Waiting lists will be created for each school that receives more requests than the available seats for the school by grade level. After each iteration/round of the selection process, waiting lists will be updated as new students request a school and need to be added to a waiting list and students on a waiting list participate in later rounds of the selection process and need to be removed from the waiting list.

Students not assigned to their first choice school during a selection round will be placed on the waiting list for that school based on their sequence number from the selection process. In addition, students not assigned to their second choice school during a selection round will be placed on the waiting list for that school based on their number from the selection process. Waiting lists will be initially created after the magnet school selection process has been completed, such that students not placed in their first and/or second choice magnet school will be placed on the waiting list for that school based on their number. After the base school choice selection rounds, waiting lists will be created and/or updated such that students participating in the base school choice selection process that are not selected for their first or second choice school will be placed on the waiting list for that school based on their number.

Waiting lists will be updated after each round of the selection process so that students previously on a waiting list who re-participate in a selection process will be removed from the original waiting list. If a student does re-participate and is not selected for their first or second choice school during re-participation, they will be placed on the waiting list(s) for the appropriate school(s) based on their number from the most recent selection process. Students participating in a selection process for the first time (did not participate in earlier iteration/cycle) that are not selected for their first or second choice school will be placed on the waiting list for that school based on their random number from the selection process.

Students on a waiting list for a school with open seats in their allocation grouping after the final iteration/cycle of the selection process will be contacted by Office of Student Assignment personnel according to a schedule as follows:

1. 10 days after completion and notification of final cycle of selection process for available seats in the student's allocation grouping (prior to Open/Walk-In Enrollment)
2. 10 days before the 1<sup>st</sup> day the year-round calendar (for year-round, modified and traditional calendar schools)
3. 10 days before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the modified calendar (for modified and traditional calendar schools)
4. 10 days before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the traditional calendar (for traditional calendar schools)
5. 10 days after the start of the year-round calendar (for year-round calendar schools)
6. 10 days after the start of the modified calendar (for modified calendar schools)
7. 10 days after the start of the traditional calendar (for traditional calendar schools)

All waiting lists will be dissolved after the 10<sup>th</sup> day of school by calendar.

### **Student Achievement**

Students from historically lower-achieving areas of the district will receive a priority ranking for assignment to regional choice school options, which will ensure that all students have access to high-quality learning environments. Allocating magnet schools to enroll no more than a set percentage of students living in close proximity will maintain a strong achievement balance at those schools and ensure they remain attractive choices for parents, recognizing that magnets are located both in the downtown Raleigh area as well as other parts of the district and that they serve different purposes for different areas of the county.

Ensuring that high-performing schools appear on choice lists for all students helps ensure that all WCPSS families have high-quality options from which to choose. While the goal is to have all schools and students performing at high levels, over time some schools will outperform others. For most families, if there is not a high-performing elementary school among their five closest schools, then the most

proximate one will be added. For families living closest to Group 1 magnets, these schools will be embedded in their regional school choices.

### **Students in Regional Special Education Programs**

While the vast majority of parents of students with disabilities who are in cross-categorical resource (CCR) special education programs - approximately 17,000 based on current membership - will participate in the Student Assignment Plan along with all other families, parents of students with disabilities who require a regional special education program - approximately 1,600 - will participate in a phased-in choice plan over the course of the next three years. Regional special education program classes are for students with low incidence disabilities. These classes are placed in schools regionally across the district, and most are in separate or self-contained classrooms. This phased-in plan for students in regional program classes will include:

- A special focus on currently existing programs for all students with disabilities to ensure the provision of high quality instruction and service delivery;
- The development of new innovative programs throughout the district that are grounded in research-based best practices;
- The identification of school facilities in optimal locations throughout the district that are best equipped to serve specific student groups (e.g. students with hearing impairments, students with autism, etc.); and
- The identification of possible feeder patterns by program type in order to provide greater stability for students with disabilities.

The timeline for the phase-in of school choice for students in regional special education programs will proceed over a three-year span, according to the timeline in Table 7.

Table 7

Special Education Regional Program School Choice Timeline

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|---|
| <p><b>Year One (2012-13)</b></p> <p><b>A Focus on Kindergarten and Level I students - Grades K-2</b></p>  |
| <p>Regional programs will remain at their current school locations.</p>   |
| <p>Special Education Services will partner with schools to build school capacity for regional programs.</p>   |
| <p>Parents of students with disabilities who continue to require the same type of Level I regional program will have the option to remain in their current school.</p>  |
| <p>Parents of students with disabilities who require the same type of Level I regional program will have the option to select the same program type at another school.</p>  |
| <p><b>Which parents may exercise school choice in Year 1?</b></p>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every parent of a student with a disability who is entering kindergarten during the 2012 school year.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every parent of a student with a disability who is exiting a kindergarten program and going into a Level I regional program <i>or</i> a general education program with support during the 2012 school year (<i>i.e. every student with a disability going into the 1<sup>st</sup> grade</i>).</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every parent of a student with a disability who continues to require a Level I regional program during the 2012 school year.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Year Two (2013-14)</b></p> <p><b>A Focus on Levels II and III Students – Grades 3-8</b></p>   |
| <p>During Year Two, Special Education Services will partner with Growth and Planning to begin the development of stable feeder patterns so that Level I and Level II programs are closely aligned, preferably within the same school.</p>   |
| <p>Special Education Services will continue to partner with schools to build school capacity for regional programs.</p>   |
| <p>Parents of students with disabilities who require the same type of Level II or Level III regional program will have the option to remain in their current school or select the same program type at another school.</p>  |
| <p>Parents of students with disabilities transitioning from a Level I program to a Level II program will have</p>   |

|  |
|--|
| the option to select a school has a Level II program.  |
| Parents of students with disabilities transitioning from Level II to Level III will have the option to select a school that has a Level III program.   |
| <b>Which <u>additional</u> parents may exercise school choice in Year 2?</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every parent of a student with a disability who continues to require a Level II regional program.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every parent of a student with a disability who continues to require a Level III regional program.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every parent of a student with a disability who is transitioning from a Level I to Level II regional program.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every parent of a student with a disability who is transitioning from a Level II to a Level III regional program.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Year Three (2013-14)</b>  |
| <b>A Focus on Level IV Students – Grades 9-12</b>  |
| Special Education Services will continue to partner with Growth and Planning to develop stable feeder patterns so that Level I and Level II programs are closely aligned, preferably within the same school. |
| Special Education Services will continue to partner with schools to build school capacity for regional programs.   |
| Parents of students with disabilities who require the same type of Level IV regional program will have the option to remain in their current school or select the same program type at another school.       |
| Parents of students with disabilities transitioning from a Level III program to a Level IV program will have the option to select a school that has a Level IV program.                                      |
| <b>Which <u>additional</u> parents may exercise school choice in Year 3?</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every parent of a student with a disability who continues to require a Level IV regional program.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every parent of a student with a disability who is transitioning from a Level III to a Level IV regional program.</li> </ul>  |

As is the case with parents participating in the larger choice plan, parents of students with disabilities in regional programs will also have the opportunity to rank school preferences. The goal is to place students with disabilities in programs reflective of parents' first choice; however, when program capacity is reached, student placements will be accommodated according to the following priorities:

- **Priority #1:** Students with disabilities in regional programs will be guaranteed placement at their first-choice program if they have a sibling at that school.
- **Priority #2:** Students with disabilities in regional programs who reside within 5 miles by driving distance of their first-choice program.

Other priority factors will include the distance of the second school choice relative to the student's home, and the intensity of the student's needs.

### **Establishment of Feeder Patterns**

Once a student is seated under this plan, those assignments will provide stability through K-12 unless a family chooses to apply into a different feeder pattern. Each elementary school will be part of a middle/high school feeder pattern, with each elementary school feeding to a single middle school when possible, and each middle school feeding to a single high school when possible. In the few cases where a single middle school feeds to more than one high school, assignments will be structured such that elementary cohorts can stay together throughout K-12. In Group 2 elementary magnet schools, students assigned as proximity students will follow a proximity feeder pattern, while students assigned as magnet students will follow the magnet feeder pattern.

Families are assured a predictable progression from elementary to middle to high based upon their initial school assignment. Each elementary school seat will be tied to a specific middle and high school, so that families will know their school of assignment K-12 upon initial entry into the system. If at some point during a child's academic career the family would like to select a different pathway, they may do so via the annual selection process, which will be based on available seats, or by requesting a transfer through the transfer process.

Guidelines Used to Create Feeder Patterns. The creation of feeder patterns for this plan to provide K-12 predictability and stability involved the realignment of many splintered feeder patterns that

existed under the previous assignment plan. Given the changes required to align schools more closely into an intact feeder pattern, several guidelines were established to govern the process. Those guidelines are detailed below. The specific feeder patterns for every school are provided in Appendix E. Feeder patterns are established such that:

1. The capacity at the feeder middle and high schools is sufficient to seat a full cohort of students rising from each of the feeder elementary schools.
2. All non-magnet traditional calendar elementary schools feed into a traditional calendar middle school.
3. Year-round elementary schools feed to year-round middle schools where possible<sup>8</sup>.
4. Group 1 magnet elementary schools feed into the appropriate magnet middle and magnet high school for the elementary program based on current program pathways.
5. Magnet application students at Group 2 magnet elementary schools feed into the appropriate magnet middle and magnet high school for the elementary program based on current program pathways.
6. Proximity students at Group 2 magnet elementary schools feed into a proximate middle and high school.
7. All Group 3 magnet elementary schools feed into proximate middle and high schools.
8. Where it does not violate any of the previous rules, adhere to existing/historic feeder patterns where possible.<sup>9</sup>
9. Where it does not violate any of the previous rules, align feeder patterns such that the schools in a proposed feeder pattern are proximate to each other.

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<sup>8</sup> Due to capacity and proximity constraints in some parts of the district, there are some year-round calendar elementary schools that are projected to feed to a traditional calendar middle school. In these instances, every effort was made to identify the current traditional calendar middle school that the year-round elementary school is assigned to as the feeder middle school.

<sup>9</sup> An existing/historic feeder pattern is defined as a majority of the nodes in a school's previous base assignment feeding to a single school at the next grade span.

New Schools. Newly-opening schools will be filled solely through the selection processes, eliminating the need to reassign students to fill schools. This may result in lower-than-optimal utilization of that building for the first few years of operation. However, this is preferable to forcibly reassigning students out of a school that they prefer. Newly opened schools will be gradually worked into a more permanent K-12 choice pyramid over time, with sufficient notice and options provided to students who are proposed to ultimately feed into that school.

### **School Capacity**

The choice process, once fully implemented, will prevent schools from going over the system's stated capacity limits by design (Appendix G). The district will create data monitoring systems to measure daily seat availability based on fixed capacity. Once a school is at capacity at a given grade level, seats will no longer be available in the choice selection process until a seat opens due to a student leaving the school.

### **Fiscal Impact**

Many components and needs of the WCPSS Student Assignment Plan can be absorbed by existing personnel and resources. However, there will be some transition costs that the district will have to absorb. These include:

- Outreach and marketing costs – materials printing and development, staff time, advertising, etc.
- Software maintenance and licensing costs
- Transportation costs (5-25 new buses, possible mobile registration vehicle, etc.)

Many of the larger costs – such as additional buses – are one-time expenditures which will only be required in the first year of the plan. Other costs – particularly staff time and software licensing – are likely to be ongoing beyond the first year of the plan.

## **Transportation**

The district will determine what form of transportation (neighborhood or express) will be available to each family at each school. When families are making their choices, they will be informed as to what type of transportation they can expect to each of the schools on their list to help them make a fully informed decision for their rankings of schools. Families living nearest to Group 1 magnets will be provided neighborhood transportation to regional choice schools. Using the existing “draw areas” for magnet schools should maintain current transportation efficiencies for students who want to attend magnet schools from throughout the county.

Students who choose to “grandfather” at their current school in the first years of the plan will maintain the same level of transportation they have today to that school through the end of the grade span. Once grandfathered students matriculate up to the next grade span (i.e., move from elementary to middle or middle to high school), the availability of transportation to that next school will be consistent with what is offered to all other families in their node for that school. In the event that a family chooses to grandfather into a school which aligns to a feeder pattern outside of their choice lists, they will have to provide their own transportation once the student transitions to the next grade span.

## **WCPSS Policies Related to Student Assignment**

Since a choice plan is fundamentally different from a base assignment plan, the transition to such a plan will involve necessary changes in the composition and language used in various school system policies. Policies and rules requiring rewording and modification include the following:

- Policy 6202 plus associated rules and procedures (School Assignment Plan)
- Policy 6203–Transfers
- Policy 6203.8– Athletic Participation
- Policy 7245– School Capacity

- Numerous policies related to transportation
- A policy for magnetization & demagnetization of schools needs to be proposed

### **Outreach and Education**

The WCPSS Student Assignment Plan depends heavily on comprehensive, ongoing community outreach efforts. Families will enroll children at local schools where they will be provided information about how the choice process works. The WCPSS Office of Student Assignment will also serve as a comprehensive resource for families about the enrollment and registration process. Other community-based resources such as pediatricians who conduct Kindergarten health assessments currently required will also be enlisted to help engage the community in understanding the school registration and choice process.

The WCPSS Office of Family and Community Engagement will have primary responsibility for the coordination and delivery of outreach efforts. Other areas of WCPSS Central Services whose work regularly involves community groups (e.g., Communications, English as a Second Language, Title I, Preschool Services, Special Education Services, etc.) will also be significantly involved in outreach efforts to support the assignment plan. Multiple methods and media for outreach are already in place, and others are under development. The following list provides examples of ways in which community engagement and outreach may occur:

#### Office of Student Assignment

- Work with Data Managers to canvas existing students to identify incoming siblings
- Work with Data Managers to enroll new students and coordinate appropriate placement of cumulative folders once the choice selection process has been completed
- Work with Data Managers to contact non-participating families to remind them of the choice selection process after enrolling a student

- Work with the Transportation Department to develop and deploy a mobile outreach and registration operation (i.e., “registration bus”) to help reach families in targeted areas of the county
- Provide brochures to families explaining the new Student Assignment Plan
- Provide computer availability to assist families with the choice process online

#### English as a Second Language Department

- Provide translation/interpreting services as requested at informational meetings intended to share information related to the plan with the public
- Leverage media contacts (Univision, La Ley, Que Pasa, etc.), community members, and ESL teachers to share information on the new plan
- Share information with parents enrolling their children through the Center for International of Enrollment (CIE); offer the opportunity for parents to select their school choices when enrolling at the CIE
- Share assignment information at Limited English Proficiency parent training sessions

#### Special Education Services

- Partner with the Special Education Advisory Council to hold a Special Education Parent Summit to delve more deeply into the topic of school choice for students with disabilities
- Partner with the Arc of Wake County to develop a parent survey for distribution to all parents of students with disabilities. The survey items will include topics related to school choice to help inform regional program development
- Work with parent groups to disseminate information about the student assignment plan for students with disabilities
- Participate with other departments within WCPSS to distribute information
- Inform all Preschool, Cross-Categorical Kindergarten, and Level I special education teachers about the initial phase of the student assignment plan for students with disabilities

- Inform all special education teachers about the overall student assignment plan for student with disabilities
- Participate in the Family-School Partnership Day and other information sessions with Preschool Special Education Services

#### Preschool Special Education Services

- Organize a Family School Partnership Day information session for parents and provide information about transition to kindergarten and about the choice plan
- Organize similar parent session(s) at night for parents of itinerant children or any parent who could not attend the session in their school or region when it was offered
- Ask all teachers and service providers of current preschool special education students to provide information to parents of 4 year olds who will transition to Kindergarten about the plan
- As students come to the Assessment Center for referrals for special education as preschoolers, incorporate information about the choice plan for students who will be in Kindergarten next year.
- Send our annual letter to parents about transition to Kindergarten earlier in the year so that it is within the choice selection time period and also invite them to attend one of the information sessions.
- Enlist the support of community partners within the four-year old programs for distribution of materials, parent information sessions, and other outreach activities

#### Communications

- Press releases, web stories, information included in e-newsletters, social media postings (i.e., Facebook and Twitter), on-set interviews with various news media outlets
- Devote a section of the website to thoroughly explain the process
- Partner with the Wake County PTA Council to advertise to school PTAs and provide materials for dissemination; Provide briefings for Wake PTA Council and school PTA leadership providing

the materials to share in their school communities; Encourage sign up to receive follow up electronic communications

- Create videos, presentations, and fact sheets that can be used in presenting information to the public
- Create an online resource center for those receiving the information to share what they heard with others
- Create videos for different populations such as non-English-speaking families, the general public, school staff members, PTA groups, etc.
- Provide video of presentation to staff, along with presentations and fact sheets on intranet and internet
- Create a “process walk-through” video/presentation for use online and at meetings
- Establish a Speakers’ Bureau especially targeting those nodes with little participation. The speakers will go out and speak with communities, civic groups, PTAs, other community groups, etc.
- Organize a Speakers’ Bureau presentation to staff with task force members briefing principals and assistant principals by area, and regional meetings for faculty and staff
- Principals will provide special announcements about the plan and where to go for more information via School Messenger
- Place printed information (fliers, publications, posters) in libraries, community centers, YMCAs, day cares, preschools, human services, doctor's offices, grocery stores, churches, businesses, etc. targeted to pre-Kindergarten families
- Prepare text and web buttons that schools can use on their websites, in their own newsletters, in PTA newsletters, in e-mails to parents, etc.
- Prepare talking points for all employees. Place talking points on a pocket card so they can talk to their neighbors

- Identify any large cultural gatherings such as cultural fairs etc. where speakers and materials for dissemination of information can be provided
- Recruit Spanish-speaking staff and school family leaders for targeted family visits for Spanish-speaking families. Provide them a short video in Spanish that plays on an iPad or other portable device with basic facts of the plan and explains the parent's role
- Hold briefings to update Spanish media and community leaders on the process and the impact on families
- Prepare special information for the Hispanic media
- Outreach to African-American and Spanish language newspapers to provide a special section of content with space for advertising. WCPSS will provide the content about the plan, but the newspapers would be responsible for selling the ad space to cover costs and generate profits
- Large newspaper ads, radio and TV public service announcements
- Create web ads to place on high-traffic websites such as WRAL.com, etc
- Hold a special sign-up day at community centers in those nodes with little participation in the test drive – may partner with others to provide other services at the same time such as immunizations.
- Targeted church and community center outreach to communities under-represented in the test drive. Put together meetings in conjunction with churches and other community groups in these areas.
- Arrange for computer labs in schools around the county (not every school, but targeted for coverage) to open to the public for purposes of school registration during various weeknight and one weekend daytime slots during the application period, and establish special times where non-English speakers can get help in those labs
- Produce a DVD/brochure package to sell (at cost) to real estate agents to give to prospective home buyers
- Coordinate with other social service providers to target difficult to reach parents

- Brand the student assignment plan with a phrase and graphic presentation with our graphic artists preparing a striking visual representation that can be added to print and electronic communications
- Weekly 90-second audio podcast with announcements from the school system about the latest information parents need on student assignment presented in English and Spanish
- Provide briefings for Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce Education Committee and area chambers of commerce leadership, as well as major area employers such as SAS, IBM, Cisco, WakeMed, Glaxo, Rex, Duke Raleigh Hospital, Progress Energy, etc; encourage sign-up to receive follow up electronic communications and provide them materials to share in their communities
- Provide briefings for local higher education leadership at NC State University, Wake Technical Community College, Meredith, Peace, Shaw, St. Augustine's, et.; encourage sign-up to receive follow up electronic communications and provide them materials to share in their communities
- Provide briefings for county and municipal leadership including elected officials, county government leadership, city leadership and town managers; encourage sign-up to receive follow up electronic communications and provide them materials to share in their communities
- Provide brief weekly email communication to the people from these groups who sign up to receive it on the progress of adoption and implementation of the proposal
- Provide printing for pamphlets, posters, brochures, banners, etc.

### Magnet Programs

- Magnet Programs will disseminate information at all marketing and recruitment functions, such as:
  - Pre-K Events
  - Monthly parent information sessions scheduled from October - February at the Magnet Resource Center

- Magnet Fair
- Share information with visitors and callers to the Magnet Resource Center
- Share information via email inquiries to the Magnet Center email, the Magnet website, and Magnet newsletters to the public
- All Magnet Coordinators will be informed of the details of the new assignment plan in order to respond accurately to the public on a regular basis about choice in WCPSS
- In order to reach those families without home internet access, set up a place at which families living near magnet schools can come for help with the application process in each magnet school

#### Counseling and Student Services

- Work with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to determine children on the subsidy waiting list who were four years old by zip code
- Work with the Director of Clinical Services at all sites, Director of Child Health Clinics, Manager of Child Care Subsidy, Manager of WIC, Director of Community Partnerships, and Director of Child Care Services Association to determine avenues of outreach through their organizations
- Work with school based counselors to provide guidance to existing students and their families wishing to enter the choice process
- Work with homeless shelters to provide guidance to the choice process

#### Project Enlightenment

- Identify private day care facilities to provide school enrollment materials explaining the choice process
- Coordinate outreach efforts with Counseling and Student Services
- Utilize existing Resource Center to provide information to families
- Work with Ready To Learn centers in WCPSS to provide information to families

### Collaborate with Wake Education Partnership

- Work with WCPSS on reconnecting with Hispanic leaders initially contacted by the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce and Wake Ed Partnership
- Work with other large non-profits to coordinate flier distribution and basic training about the message
- Work with Lifetouch on possibility of signs for buses
- Work with Landmark on determining billboard options
- Work with pediatricians for outreach options
- Work with faith-based contacts to provide outreach to all cultures
- Work with area chambers of commerce on creating a list of events for targeted outreach

Training for WCPSS Staff. The Student Assignment Plan clearly depends heavily on all WCPSS staff communicating a common message to the community. Therefore, a training component becomes an important component for all WCPSS staff. Upon approval of this proposed plan, the Office of Student Assignment will coordinate training for school-based Data Managers, Guidance Technicians, and high school Registrars so that there will be a consistent enrollment process at all school sites. The Office of Professional Development will coordinate training for remaining staff such as school Administrators and Central Services Administrators using a Train the Trainer model. Training materials will include, but are not limited to talking points for trainers, handouts appropriate for distribution, video clips, PowerPoint slides, and on-line modules for quick reference.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

As the plan is implemented, the Superintendent will evaluate the impact of the selection process and may make recommendations as to any modifications for future years. Student achievement, school demographic and school capacity data will also be evaluated annually to properly implement selection priorities. As of 2010-11, WCPSS had 21 schools below 70 percent proficient, 36 schools with more than

50% of their students eligible for free and reduced price lunch, and 18 schools over 110% capacity.

While the plan is designed to mitigate these kinds of situations via magnet programs, selection priorities and capacity constraints, the annual review process will allow staff to monitor and report on these kinds of parameters. For example, a simulation study conducted during the plan development process suggest that the percentage of schools with more than 50% of their students eligible for free and reduced price lunch should remain fairly stable over time (see Appendix F). As the new plan is implemented, data will be available to track these kinds of forecasts as the district continues to grow.

To internally monitor the overall functioning of the assignment plan, the Superintendent will report quarterly to the Board as to the disposition of available seats, the size of any waiting lists, and any other trends related to the school choice process which may impact the plan in future years. The Superintendent will use these quarterly reviews to recommend any possible changes to the structure of the plan for future years.

School Selection Reviews. Under the WCPSS Student Assignment Plan, the district will develop a formal school selection review process. This process will help identify and support under-chosen and/or underperforming schools. Studying data from the annual selection process each year will also allow for insights as to which schools are ranked highest and by whom. Studying schools that are most attractive to parents should guide improvement efforts at under-chosen schools, which could include modifying program offerings, incentivizing high-performing staff to work at an under-chosen school, implementation of a network theme, implementation or modification of a magnet program, or other school improvement efforts.

The WCPSS Data and Accountability Department and the Office of School Assignment will assume responsibility for the annual school selection review process. These offices will develop a standard reporting protocol that will apply to all schools each year, which will contain basic descriptive data on school selection and choice selection results for each school. These offices will also develop a more detailed protocol for investigating specific trends that emerge from evaluation of the standard

results. This will involve studying schools where selection patterns are particularly unusual, or where those patterns are changing over time. These investigations will allow the district to better understand why and where schools become significantly over or under-chosen, and will inform possible solutions to ensure that all WCPSS schools remain attractive options for all families.

This review will also include an analysis of the location and nature of magnet programs and other special school-based programs offered in the district (Global/STEM network schools, Renaissance schools, etc.). It will assess the extent to which each program is meeting its stated objectives. It will also assess the extent to which these programs are offering the diversity and breadth of programming required to ensure that all Wake County schools remain attractive choices for all families. This will include specific recommendations about whether these programs need to be expanded, modified, eliminated, or moved to other locations in the county in order to fulfill their stated missions and best support a choice-based assignment plan for the district.

Community-Based Advisory Board. In addition to the aforementioned internal review procedures, a community-based advisory board will also be established to provide external oversight of the implementation of the assignment plan. The members of the board will be appointed by the Superintendent and will include leaders from the educational, civic, business, and faith communities. Membership should also reflect the needs and viewpoints of all geographic parts of the county. Membership should include members from the following entities:

- Economically Disadvantage Task Force
- Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps
- Superintendents Advisory Council
- Wake County Chamber of Commerce
- Wake Education Partnership
- WCPSS Division of Principals and Assistant Principals
- WCPSS Office of Student Assignment

- WCPSS PTA President
- WCPSS Students
- WCPSS Student Assignment Task Force
- WCPSS Teachers (calendar and Magnet representation)

The community-based advisory board will meet at least annually to review the data resulting from the choice selection process. The Data and Accountability Department and the Office of Student Assignment will brief the advisory board as to the results of the school selection review process at that time. Based on their analysis of those data, the advisory board will then make recommendations to the Superintendent and school board as to revisions or modifications to aspects of the student assignment plan to be sure that the assignment plan continues to meet the needs of the county.

APPENDIX A

WCPSS School Board Policy 6200

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

The Board of Education's goals for the student assignment process include:

- Achieving academic success for ALL children
- Creating safe and stable school environments
- Promoting community-based schools with consideration of proximity to home, student safety, and stability of family.
- Collaborating with the community to access available community resources
- Providing parents with clear choices in calendar and programs
- Providing a plan that is effective and efficient in utilization of our facilities and transportation.
- Providing a logical progression between elementary, middle, and high school that utilizes consistent, logical and predictable feeder patterns
- Supporting a positive educational environment with a commitment to maintaining superior teaching conditions
- Retaining excellent teachers and principals to enhance school choices and stability
- Offering quality programs in every school
- Provide a plan to support families and keep siblings from being separated by tracks or schools without parental consent
- Building a sense of community and connection with neighborhoods through parental involvement

Maintaining stable student populations that consider proximity to home in each Wake County school is important to ensuring academic success for all students. Assignment policies will recognize the impact of student assignment on students, families, and communities and the costs involved. The promotion of community schools with choice will increase stability, encourage parental involvement, support and strengthen the community and place emphasis on the education of every student.

Each student enrolled in the Wake County Public School System shall be assigned to a school of his or her grade level considering the attendance area in which that student's parents or court-appointed custodian is domiciled and the student resides. Exceptions will be made as necessary to limit enrollment of a school due to overcrowding or for special programmatic reasons such as the need for special education services or alternative school programs. Opportunities will be provided for high quality year round and magnet schools as viable options for families. Additional options could include vocational and alternative schools.

Student assignment plans will be based on the following factors:

A. Distance

Assignments should be made with consideration of proximity to residence. No student should be required to travel more than the maximum time established by Board Policy 7125.

B. Choice

Students may apply for a school other than their base assignment. This includes calendar options and magnet programs. Enrollment may be limited based on availability.

C. Stability of Assignment

Students should remain assigned to a school at each level (Elementary, Middle & High) unless a new school is opened, availability becomes a factor or a request for transfer is initiated by the student's parent

of legal guardian. A student's assignment will be grandfathered at their request subject to Board Policy 6203-Transfer of School Assignment.

**D. Facility Utilization**

Student assignment should seek optimal utilization of each school's capacity.

**E. Grade Structure**

Student assignment should adhere to K-5, 6-8, 9-12 grade organization whenever possible with consideration given to logical feeder patterns within communities.

**F. Alignment with the Magnet Schools Program**

The student assignment plan should include the system-wide objectives of the Magnet Program.

**G. Students with Higher Needs**

Assignments should accommodate students with higher needs, including those identified as being Limited English Proficient (LEP) or requiring services from Special Education programs.

**Footnote:**

1. Board policy regarding special education services is specified in Board Policy 6222.
2. Long-range capacity is defined as the capacity of the permanent building(s) plus the capacity of the optimal number of mobile or modular classrooms for the campus.

Adopted: May 4, 1981

Revised: January 17, 1983

Revised: May 16, 1983

Revised: November 18, 1991

Revised: April 21, 1997

Revised: January 10, 2000

Revised: March 18, 2003

Revised: December 4, 2007

Revised: May 18, 2010

## APPENDIX B

### Planning Facts and Assumptions

#### A. Assignment Plan Policy Requirements:

- The goal for the student assignment plan includes ‘achieving academic success for ALL children’ as referenced in Policy 6200.
- The student assignment plan must be based on the factors of Policy 6200: Distance, choice, stability, facility utilization, grade structure, alignment with magnet schools program and students with higher needs.

#### B. Distance (Proximity)

- Based on community feedback, many schools are the center of their community. Proximate schools are also seen as more conducive to parental involvement and student involvement in extra-curricular activities, such as academics, arts, music and/or athletics.
- If all students went to their most proximate school today, there would be extensive overcrowding at 53 schools and significant under-enrollment at 50 schools.
- WCPSS is adding 3,000-6,000 students per year and our schools are currently at 90.2% of capacity.
- A rigid base assignment plan will continue to require regular reassignments, as it did in the past, assuming growth continues to outpace capacity.
- Given Wake County demographics, assignment of students based solely on proximity will result in some higher concentrations of low-performing students.

#### C. Choice:

- All elementary and middle students currently have a set of two base school options: one year round and one traditional calendar; students currently have up to 11 elementary, 5 middle and 5 high school magnet program options.

- There are 32 magnet schools that accepted 56% of applicants for 11-12; Year-round schools accepted 94% of applicants for 11-12. Traditional schools accepted 100% of applicants for 11-12.
- 11,570 students attend magnet schools via application in 2010-11 (District 1: 1753, District 2: 1531, District 3: 2009, District 4: 426<sup>10</sup>, District 5: 1189, District 6: 1316, District 7: 1186, District 8: 1364, District 9: 796<sup>11</sup>)
- To accommodate these 11,570 magnet students, other students are assigned to schools less proximate to their residence.

#### D. Stability:

- Based on feedback, many parents and students prefer to be ‘grandfathered’ with transportation, meaning whatever assignment plan evolves, parents and students want to keep their current school of assignment, unless they choose to opt out and apply for another choice.
- Many parents want to ensure that sibling priority remains an overriding assignment criterion. According to the 2010 WCPSS Calendar Survey, having siblings assigned to different year-round tracks or schools with different calendar types is unpopular with parents (<http://www.wcpss.net/Board/2010-calendar-survey/WCPSS-Calendar-Survey-Presentation-Slides.pdf>)
- Enrollment will increase over time and we must address crowding and under-enrollment.
- 15 elementary, 2 middle and 1 high schools are currently overcrowded (>110%); 22 elementary, 6 middle and 1 high schools are under-enrolled (<80%).
- In some areas of the county, current school locations are not aligned with current capacity and/or future capacity projections.

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<sup>10</sup> Many magnets in this district serve as base schools.

<sup>11</sup> Least number of schools in this district.

#### E. Capacity

- According to the 2010-11 WCPSS Facilities Utilization Report we have 75,438 elementary seats, 33,317 middle school seats, and 43,056 high school seats. Growth indicates we will exceed this capacity in the near future.
- WCPSS expects to enroll 51,476 additional students in the next 10 years which would necessitate the building of 25 schools to maintain current building utilization levels of 100%.
- WCPSS is opening one new high school, one new middle school, and two new elementary schools by 2013-14.
- According to the 2010-11 North Carolina Facility Needs Survey WCPSS ranks first in the state for the most temporary classrooms with 1,161. Second-ranked Charlotte-Mecklenburg has 625.
- According to the 2010-11 WCPSS Facilities Utilization Report, temporary classrooms represent 17% of WCPSS's total school capacity (Elementary: 17%; Middle: 13%; High:20%).
- Year round schools are an important tool for accommodating capacity. Currently 47% of our elementary school capacity is attributed to year round schools and 33% of our middle school capacity is attributed to year round schools.

#### F. Grade Structure

- Policy 6200 stipulates that student assignment should adhere to K-5, 6-8, 9-12 grade organization whenever possible with consideration given to logical feeder patterns within communities. All WCPSS schools fall within the grade structure guidelines.

#### G. Alignment with Magnet Objectives

- Magnets have begun to serve three primary purposes in WCPSS: Preventing the spread of high-poverty schools, providing attractive programming to competing with charter and private schools,

and providing specialized programming and expanded educational opportunities to families throughout the district.

- Based on feedback, the unique and special magnet programming attracts some parents and students who might otherwise choose charters or private schools. This feature makes WCPSS more attractive in an increasingly competitive ‘school market’ environment that includes charter and private schools.
- The current magnet plan and locations of most magnets give students in many historically low performing areas options to attend a school with special programming or a school with less poverty farther from home.
- Based on experiences of other school districts, the magnet investment of \$13 million is inexpensive when compared to the significant resources other districts pour into restoring low performing schools (1% of WCPSS annual budget).

#### H. High Needs Students/Student Achievement

- The most important variable for student achievement is a high quality teacher (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Sanders & Horn, 1998; Heck, 2007).
- Teacher quality is an important variable for promoting student achievement. Many aspects of teacher quality, including credentials and experience, value-added achievement measures, and observational data have all been linked to student achievement (Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007; Heck, 2007; Jacob & Lefgren, 2008; Kane, Taylor, Tyler, & Wooten, 2011; Sanders & Horn, 1998).
- Because they rely on standardized testing data, value-added measures of teacher quality (e.g., EVAAS) only apply to 19% of WCPSS teachers and by itself are insufficient system-wide measures of teacher performance.

- In WCPSS, among elementary math teachers with EVAAS value-added testing results, 67% of teachers rated “above average” hold neither an advanced graduate degree nor a national board certification.
- In WCPSS, among high school teachers with EVAAS value-added testing results, 80% of teachers rated “above average” hold neither an advanced graduate degree nor a national board certification.
- WCPSS pays advanced degree and nationally board certified teachers additional salary based on their degree and certification.
- We do not give teachers any additional pay for rating “above average” on value-added measures such as EVAAS.
- In some areas, there are insufficient “above average” rated teachers given the densities of low performing students.
- Some districts, such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg, are beginning to establish predictors and measures of K-3 student achievement.
- All students have needs. Low, middle and high achieving students all have significant needs and deserve to have those needs met.

#### I. Community Support for WCPSS

- There is strong support for magnet programs and calendar choice, as 15% of entering kindergarteners apply for the magnet program and 14% apply for a calendar choice.

#### J. Frustrations With the Old Plan

- Over the past 10 years, WCPSS has opened 45 schools: 26 elementary schools, 9 middle schools, 5 high schools, converted 1 high school to 4 small schools, 1 special/optional school, and 1 early

college high school. This has resulted in the reassignment of thousands of students throughout this high growth period.

- Based on feedback, limited traditional calendar choices in high growth areas led to the perception of mandatory year round school assignments, which were unpopular in those areas.
- Currently many base and calendar application feeder patterns are not aligned by cohort. Based on feedback, the community expects the new plan to address this issue.
- Some community members have expressed concerns that too many students have long bus rides. In the 2010-11 school year, 530 WCPSS students travel more than 45 minutes by bus to their base school.

#### K. Challenges Facing WCPSS

- System-wide high school seating shortfalls (-1,591) are first realized in 2014-15, with shortfalls in the Western areas (-741) noted as early as 2012-13.
- System-wide elementary school seating shortfalls (-2,423) are first realized in 2015-16, with shortfalls in the Eastern (-230) and Northern (-731) areas noted as early as 2013-14.
- System-wide middle school seating shortfalls are not realized until 2017-18, but there are shortfalls in the North-western area (-190) noted as early as 2012-13.
- Growth: WCPSS will add two new high schools, one new middle school and one new elementary school by 2014.
- According to the January 2011 Wake County Membership Projections, we are projected to have insufficient school capacity as of 2016-17:
  - 17% of elementary school seats are in trailers with a system-wide seating shortage of 4,700 seats;
  - 13% of middle school seats are in trailers with a system-wide seating surplus of 300 seats;

- 17% of high school seats are in trailers with a system-wide seating shortage of 4,600 seats.
- Limited funding resources - WCPSS ranks 108 of 115 districts in NC in State Per Pupil Expenditures (excluding child nutrition). WCPSS ranks 94 out of 115 districts in NC in Total Per Pupil Expenditures (excluding child nutrition).
- 14 WCPSS schools are on the NCLB Title I School Improvement list. Charlotte Mecklenburg has 18 and Guilford County has 17 (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/ayp/1011title1schimprovlist.xls>).
- High-poverty schools tend to have difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers, in part due to the working conditions these schools tend to produce (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Hanushek et al., 2004; Ingersoll, 2001; Jacob, 2007; Horng, 2009).
- Students in schools with high concentrations of poor and non-white students tend to have less positive educational outcomes (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2009; Lee, 2007; Machtinger, 2007; Mickelson & Bottia, 2010; Southworth, 2010; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Vigdor & Ludwig, 2008). Schools that fall in this category will require more resources over time.

#### Planning Assumptions

- We must change the way we assign students to schools.
- Anything is open for discussion in terms of developing a new plan.
- For a school to be a legitimate choice it must be geographically reasonable.
- There will need to be some geographic parameters for the plan (i.e. every student cannot have district-wide choice).
- Magnet schools are an enduring and attractive part of the Wake County Public School System.
- Choice is important for the success of the current plan, is an expectation of this community, and should continue to exist for programs and/or calendars.

- Transportation will be worked out to meet the needs of the plan within budget constraints.
- Proximate schools may introduce transportation efficiencies in two aspects: First, attending more proximate schools may minimize travel time and therefore fuel expenditures. Second, if students attend schools near their homes, there may be fewer requirements for activity buses to drive long distances.
- There is a tipping point where a school becomes undesirable to parents, related to a combination of attendance, program and levels of poverty.
- We can move students to meet academic needs and the needs of the plan; secondarily, possibly incentivize teachers and principals to move.
- Schools and communities benefit from positive educational environments with superior teaching conditions.
- Parents choose schools for an infinite variety of reasons, not only student achievement.
- A goal is to enable an increase in student achievement for all students.
- Decisions must not create unattractive schools for student achievement.
- Student achievement data will continue to be available.
- We must review current magnet objectives and adjust accordingly.
- Once in a school, parents want to be guaranteed that their child will be allowed to stay through the entire level, unless they choose to move to another school.
- Based on experience with other choice plans, parents will choose to move to new schools on their own, without having to be reassigned.
- Siblings who will be in the same school level at the same time should have acceptance priority.
- In order to maximize capacity in all schools, we cannot allow schools to go over their capacity.
- For a choice plan to be successful there has to be a rigorous school improvement process for under-chosen or under-performing schools.

Lessons from other districts and from the research on choice assignment plans show that the following guidelines must be respected in order for the plan to meet its goals:

- The plan should not create base assignments or any guarantee of a base-assigned school.  
Assigning students to base school while allowing other students to apply to attend the same school could create extreme overcrowding as the base continues to increase throughout the school year. This overcrowding would cause some schools to become ineligible to be selected as a choice school because of the size of the population already assigned to the school.
- The plan should not guarantee that all families in a neighborhood will be selected for the same school. Since families will rank schools based on their preference, a family's first choice may not be the same as the first choice for others in the neighborhood. This would restrict the ability of a child to be selected for the school they rank first on their list of base schools. Additionally, seat availability may not be able to accommodate all students in a given neighborhood.
- The plan should not guarantee that everyone will get selected for their 1<sup>st</sup> choice because seat availability may not be able to accommodate all students who rank it as a first choice.
- Families must rank the required number of schools on their choice list so that all students have an opportunity to be selected and assigned to a school based on their preference. Ranking only one or two choices creates the possibility that a student might not be selected for a school(s) requested. Since there is no base assignment, students not seated through selection process will have to be placed at a school with open seats by the district.
- If requested, siblings should be assigned to same school and/or calendar or track to maintain continuity for families.
- The plan should allow any currently enrolled student to grandfather through the end of the grade span with their current level of transportation services. This will ensure that any family who wishes to maintain their current school assignment is able to do so without an interruption to their prior level of service.

- A sufficient percentage of seats at high-performing schools must be allocated for students living in low performing nodes. This creates a true choice of a high-performing school for any student who wishes to rank it on their choice list. This should also allow students in these areas to be selected for a high-performing school without creating a situation where any one school could be selected by a high number of students from low performing nodes thus creating an unhealthy balance of low performing students at that school.
- The plan should create an achievement-driven feeder pattern for middle and high school assignments that ensures that all schools are healthy. It should also ensure that feeder patterns are healthy to avoid creating schools/feeder patterns that are not attractive.
- The plan must provide opportunities for ALL families to participate in the plan's selection process. It must include extensive outreach in all areas of the community. The school district should partner with other community groups or organizations to communicate with historically under-represented groups.
- The plan must maintain a strong system of magnet schools to avoid the creation of unattractive schools in areas with a high number of low-performing or low income students. These schools must host distinct programs that offer expanded educational opportunities within the school district as competition to other educational outlets available in the community. They must maintain a sufficient allocation of seats for students not living in proximity to the school so that it is a true and attractive choice.
- In a choice plan, ALL schools are schools of choice and must be attractive choices for families. There must be yearly monitoring of the overall plan and each school's application numbers to ensure that the plan is being implemented with integrity. The plan must implement research-based school improvement measures for under-chosen schools to make them attractive choices.

- The plan must utilize a transparent computer software system to process applications and generate student assignments in accordance with the plan's assignment priorities and enrollment fairness guidelines.

APPENDIX C  
Research Reviewed

## TEACHER QUALITY/EFFECTIVENESS

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## APPENDIX D

### Formula for Determining High-Performing Schools

## Definition of High-Performing Schools for WCPSS Student Assignment Plan

First, all schools are ranked based on how they measure out on the following components across a three-year time frame:

| <b>Weight For Each Component "Achievement Choice" Formula Components (3-Year Average Rank)</b> | <b>Elementary Schools</b> | <b>Middle Schools</b> | <b>High Schools</b> |
|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. % of Teachers Designated as "High Performing"*  | 50%                       | 50%                   | 50%                 |
| 2. % of Students Making Growth Targets - Level I and II  | 20%                       | 20%                   | 20%                 |
| 3. % of Students Making Growth Targets - Level III   | 10%                       | 10%                   | 7.5%                |
| 4. % of Students Making Growth Targets - Level IV  | 10%                       | 10%                   | 7.5%                |
| 5. Overall Proficiency Rate  | 10%                       | 10%                   | 7.5%                |
| 6. Four-Year Graduation Rate   | N/A                       | N/A                   | 7.5%                |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>100%</b>               | <b>100%</b>           | <b>100%</b>         |

\* - For Component #1, the following formulas will be applied for each school:

For 2012-13:

The percentage of EOC and/or EOG teachers in the school who are designated as above a set standard based on achievement growth experienced by the students for whom they were primarily responsible (e.g., EVAAS, ABCs, etc.) 80%

The percentage of all teachers in the school who have a Master's Degree or higher in their field of assignment 10%

The percentage of all teachers in the school who have National Board Certification in their field of assignment 10%

Starting in 2013-14<sup>12</sup>:

The percentage of EOC and/or EOG teachers in the school who are designated as above a set standard based on achievement growth experienced by the students for whom they were primarily responsible (e.g., EVAAS, ABCs, etc.) 40%

The percentage of all teachers in the school who receive ratings of “accomplished” or higher across all five strands of the NC Educator Evaluation System 40%

The percentage of all teachers in the school who have a Master's Degree or higher in their field of assignment 10%

The percentage of all teachers in the school who have National Board Certification in their field of assignment 10%

Second, schools that do not have at least 70% of students proficient and which are not in the top 50% of the district in terms of their ranking for growth with Level I and II students were eliminated for consideration. Of the remaining schools, the top non-magnet schools<sup>13</sup> by rank order within each grade span were then designated as “high-performing” schools for purposes of choice selection priorities.

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<sup>12</sup> As of 2012-13, only selected teachers will be receiving evaluations under the new NC Educator Evaluation System. The addition of the results of teacher evaluations from the NC Educator Evaluation System will therefore not become part of the High Performing teacher definition in this formula until after the state begins to require all teachers to be evaluated annually under this new system, which is anticipated to occur by 2013-14.

<sup>13</sup> While some magnet schools may meet the criteria, they are not being utilized as such for purposes of choice selection priority.

APPENDIX E

K-12 Feeder Pattern Assignments

| <b>Elementary</b>              | <b>Middle</b> | <b>High</b>       |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Apex                           | Apex          | Apex High         |
| Baucom                         | Apex          | Apex High         |
| Penny Road                     | Apex          | Apex High         |
| Olive Chapel                   | Lufkin Road   | Apex High         |
| Laurel Park                    | Salem         | Apex High         |
| Salem                          | Salem         | Apex High         |
|                                |               |                   |
| Combs - Proximity Students     | Centennial    | Athens Drive High |
| Dillard Drive                  | Dillard Drive | Athens Drive High |
| Swift Creek                    | Dillard Drive | Athens Drive High |
| Yates Mill Pond                | Dillard Drive | Athens Drive High |
| Oak Grove                      | Lufkin Road   | Athens Drive High |
|                                |               |                   |
| Conn - Proximity Students      | Daniels       | Broughton High    |
| Joyner - Proximity Students    | Daniels       | Broughton High    |
| Underwood - Proximity Students | Daniels       | Broughton High    |
| Wiley - Proximity Students     | Daniels       | Broughton High    |
| Root                           | Daniels       | Broughton High    |
| Stough                         | Daniels       | Broughton High    |
| York                           | Daniels       | Broughton High    |
| Lacy                           | Martin        | Broughton High    |
| Olds                           | Martin        | Broughton High    |
|                                |               |                   |
| Adams                          | East Cary     | Cary High         |
| Briarcliff                     | Reedy Creek   | Cary High         |
| Cary                           | Reedy Creek   | Cary High         |
| Kingswood                      | Reedy Creek   | Cary High         |
| Reedy Creek                    | Reedy Creek   | Cary High         |
| Farmington Woods               | West Cary     | Cary High         |
| Northwoods                     | West Cary     | Cary High         |
|                                |               |                   |
| Lake Myra                      | East Wake     | East Wake High    |
| Carver                         | Wendell       | East Wake High    |
| Wendell                        | Wendell       | East Wake High    |
|                                |               |                   |
| Wiley - Magnet Students        | Ligon         | Enloe High        |
| Underwood - Magnet Students    | Martin        | Enloe High        |
| Hunter                         | Ligon         | Enloe High        |
| Powell                         | Ligon         | Enloe High        |
| Bugg                           | Carnage       | Enloe High        |

|                  |                |                     |
|------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Fuller           | Carnage        | Enloe High          |
| Washington       | Carnage        | Enloe High          |
|                  |                |                     |
| Fuquay-Varina    | Fuquay-Varina  | Fuquay-Varina High  |
| Lincoln Heights  | Fuquay-Varina  | Fuquay-Varina High  |
| Willow Springs   | Fuquay-Varina  | Fuquay-Varina High  |
| Ballentine       | Holly Grove    | Fuquay-Varina High  |
| Herbert Akins    | Holly Grove    | Fuquay-Varina High  |
|                  |                |                     |
| Aversboro        | East Garner    | Garner High         |
| Creech Road      | East Garner    | Garner High         |
| Smith            | East Garner    | Garner High         |
| Vandora Springs  | East Garner    | Garner High         |
| East Garner      | North Garner   | Garner High         |
| Rand Road        | North Garner   | Garner High         |
| Timber Drive     | North Garner   | Garner High         |
| Vance            | North Garner   | Garner High         |
|                  |                |                     |
| Davis Drive      | Davis Drive    | Green Hope High     |
| Green Hope       | Davis Drive    | Green Hope High     |
| Turner Creek     | Salem          | Green Hope High     |
| Weatherstone     | West Cary      | Green Hope High     |
|                  |                |                     |
| Heritage         | Heritage       | Heritage High       |
| Harris Creek     | Rolesville     | Heritage High       |
| Riverbend        | Rolesville     | Heritage High       |
|                  |                |                     |
| Holly Grove      | Holly Grove    | Holly Springs High  |
| Holly Ridge      | Holly Ridge    | Holly Springs High  |
| Holly Springs    | Holly Ridge    | Holly Springs High  |
|                  |                |                     |
| Barwell Road     | East Wake      | Knightdale High     |
| Hodge Road       | East Wake      | Knightdale High     |
| Lockhart         | East Wake      | Knightdale High     |
| Forestville Road | Wendell        | Knightdale High     |
| Knightdale       | Wendell        | Knightdale High     |
|                  |                |                     |
| Hilburn          | Hilburn        | Leesville Road High |
| Brier Creek      | Leesville Road | Leesville Road High |
| Jeffrey's Grove  | Leesville Road | Leesville Road High |
| Leesville Road   | Leesville Road | Leesville Road High |
| Sycamore Creek   | Leesville Road | Leesville Road High |

|                              |                      |                        |
|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
|                              |                      |                        |
| Banks Road                   | West Lake            | Middle Creek High      |
| Middle Creek                 | West Lake            | Middle Creek High      |
| West Lake                    | West Lake            | Middle Creek High      |
|                              |                      |                        |
| Douglas - Magnet Students    | East Millbrook       | Millbrook High         |
| Joyner - Magnet Students     | East Millbrook       | Millbrook High         |
| Millbrook                    | East Millbrook       | Millbrook High         |
| Wilburn                      | Durant Road          | Millbrook High         |
| Baileywick                   | West Millbrook       | Millbrook High         |
| Brassfield                   | West Millbrook       | Millbrook High         |
| North Ridge                  | West Millbrook       | Millbrook High         |
|                              |                      |                        |
| Carpenter                    | East Cary            | Panther Creek High     |
| Morrisville                  | East Cary            | Panther Creek High     |
| Alston Ridge                 | Mills Park           | Panther Creek High     |
| Highcroft Drive              | Mills Park           | Panther Creek High     |
| Mills Park                   | Mills Park           | Panther Creek High     |
| Cedar Fork                   | West Cary            | Panther Creek High     |
|                              |                      |                        |
| Sanford Creek                | Rolesville           | Rolesville High        |
| Rolesville                   | Wake Forest          | Rolesville High        |
| Wakelon                      | Zebulon              | Rolesville High        |
| Zebulon                      | Zebulon              | Rolesville High        |
|                              |                      |                        |
| Brooks - Proximity Students  | Carroll              | Sanderson High         |
| Douglas - Proximity Students | Carroll              | Sanderson High         |
| Lead Mine                    | Carroll              | Sanderson High         |
| Lynn Road                    | Carroll              | Sanderson High         |
| Green                        | Durant Road          | Sanderson High         |
|                              |                      |                        |
| Walnut Creek                 | Carnage              | Southeast Raleigh High |
| Brentwood                    | Centennial           | Southeast Raleigh High |
| Combs - Magnet Students      | Centennial           | Southeast Raleigh High |
| Conn - Magnet Students       | Centennial           | Southeast Raleigh High |
| Brooks - Magnet Students     | Moore Square Museums | Southeast Raleigh High |
| Poe                          | Moore Square Museums | Southeast Raleigh High |
|                              |                      |                        |
| Jones Dairy                  | Heritage             | Wake Forest High       |
| North Forest Pines Drive     | Heritage             | Wake Forest High       |
| Forest Pines Drive           | Wake Forest          | Wake Forest High       |
| Wake Forest                  | Wake Forest          | Wake Forest High       |

|                                |                |                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Elementary E-25 (open 2012-13) | Wake Forest    | Wake Forest High |
|                                |                |                  |
| Fox Road                       | East Millbrook | Wakefield High   |
| Pleasant Union                 | Wakefield      | Wakefield High   |
| Wakefield                      | Wakefield      | Wakefield High   |
| Wildwood Forest                | Wakefield      | Wakefield High   |
| Durant Road                    | Durant Road    | Wakefield High   |
| Elementary E-20 (open 2012-13) | Durant Road    | Wakefield High   |
|                                |                |                  |

**District-wide Application Schools**

| <b>Elementary</b>    | <b>Middle</b>                                       | <b>High</b>   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Partnership - Choice | Moore Square Museums                                | Southeast Raleigh High                              |
|                      |   |   |
|                      | Wake Leadership Academy for Boys<br>(open 2012-13)  | Wake Leadership Academy for Boys<br>(open 2012-13)  |
|                      |   |   |
|                      | Wake Leadership Academy for Girls<br>(open 2012-13) | Wake Leadership Academy for Girls<br>(open 2012-13) |
|                      |   |   |
|                      |   | Wake Early College HS                               |
|                      |   |   |
|                      |   | Wake NCSU STEM Early College HS                     |

APPENDIX F

School Poverty Distribution – Simulation Study

## Simulation of Free/Reduced Price Lunch Distribution for Wake County Public Schools (WCPSS)

In an effort to forecast how the distribution of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch in WCPSS may look in the future, a simulation study was undertaken to forecast possible changes in those data over time. The study was based on the following data points:

- In 2010-11, the percentage of WCPSS students eligible for free or reduced price lunch (FRL) was 32.4.  
*(source: <http://www.wcpss.net/demographics/quickfacts/10/sys-10.html>)*
- Over the next several years, the WCPSS student population is projected to grow to nearly 200,000 students.  
*(source: <http://www.wcpss.net/demographics/reports/book10/IVb-projections.pdf>)*
- In 2010-11, WCPSS had 36 schools (22% of all schools) with more than 50% of their students eligible for FRL.  
*(source: <http://www.wcpss.net/demographics/quickfacts/10/sys-10.html>)*

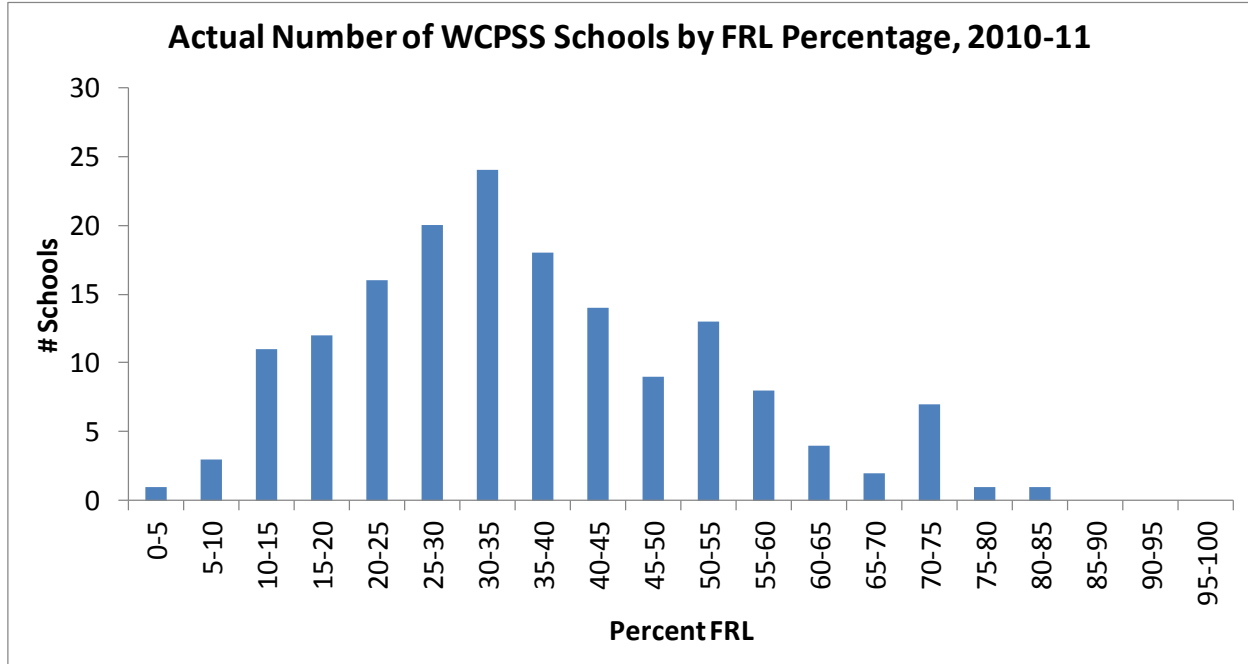
To forecast how the distribution of school FRL percentages may change in the future, a set of simulations were run. These simulations projected out the distribution of school FRL percentages in WCPSS to a time when the district has 200 schools. The assumption was made that as we move from 164 schools to 200 schools over the next several years, the overall percentage of FRL students in the district will not change significantly. Although the percentage of FRL students has actually been increasing by approximately 1% per year in recent years<sup>14</sup>, holding the percentage constant to 2010-11 levels maintains an “apples to apples” comparison for simulation purposes.

Forecasts to a 200-school scenario were made using the 2010-11 distribution of FRL percentages across schools. The distribution of FRL percentages by school from 2010-11 are detailed in Figure 1. While the overall percent FRL at the student level in 2010-11 was 34.2%, the average school percent FRL in 2010-11 was 36.5%.

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<sup>14</sup> Sources: [http://www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research/reports/2008/0711elem\\_outcomes2006\\_07.pdf](http://www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research/reports/2008/0711elem_outcomes2006_07.pdf) and <http://www.wcpss.net/demographics/quickfacts/10/sys-10.html>.

Figure 1



To create the simulation data, a random number generator was used to create a distribution of 200 schools drawn from a population with the same mean (36.5) and standard deviation (16.8) as the 2010-11 WCPSS distribution. Since the current WCPSS distribution shown in Figure 1 most closely resembled a normal (Gaussian) distribution, the simulations assumed that the school FRL percentages would follow a normal distribution.

The simulated data for the 200 schools were drawn from a normal distribution with a mean of 36.5 and standard deviation of 16.8. The random number generator was used to draw 20 independent random samples of 200 schools and their estimated FRL percentages. The results of the 20 simulations are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

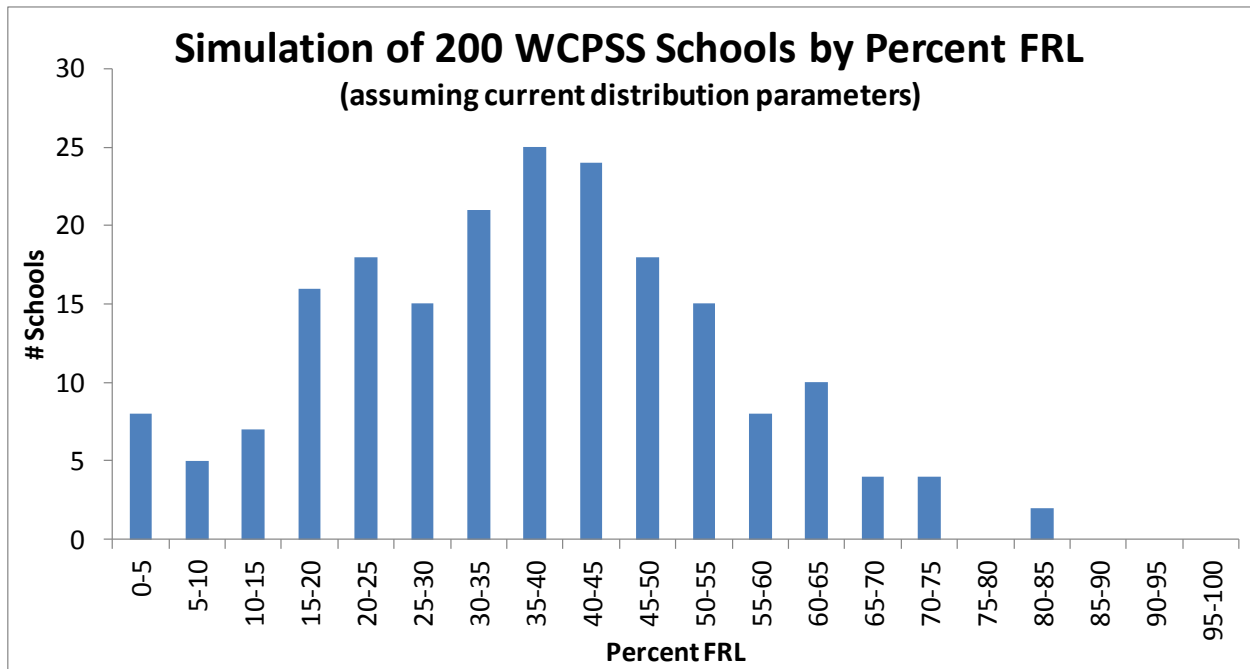
## School FRL Percentage Simulation Results Using Current WCPSS Mean and Standard Deviation

| Simulation<br>(200 schools each) | # Schools<br>above 50%<br>FRL | % of Schools<br>above 50% FRL |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1                                | 37                            | 19%                           |
| 2                                | 45                            | 23%                           |
| 3                                | 53                            | 27%                           |
| 4                                | 42                            | 21%                           |
| 5                                | 40                            | 20%                           |
| 6                                | 49                            | 25%                           |
| 7                                | 36                            | 18%                           |
| 8                                | 54                            | 27%                           |
| 9                                | 55                            | 28%                           |
| 10                               | 32                            | 16%                           |
| 11                               | 45                            | 23%                           |
| 12                               | 46                            | 23%                           |
| 13                               | 51                            | 26%                           |
| 14                               | 43                            | 22%                           |
| 15                               | 39                            | 20%                           |
| 16                               | 43                            | 22%                           |
| 17                               | 43                            | 22%                           |
| 18                               | 43                            | 22%                           |
| 19                               | 40                            | 20%                           |
| 20                               | 34                            | 17%                           |
| <b>Average</b>                   | <b>43.50</b>                  | <b>22%</b>                    |
| <b>Standard Deviation (SD)</b>   | <b>6.48</b>                   | <b>3%</b>                     |
| <b>Average + 1SD</b>             | <b>49.98</b>                  | <b>25%</b>                    |
| <b>Average - 1SD</b>             | <b>37.02</b>                  | <b>19%</b>                    |

Using the average from across the 20 simulations, and applying a margin of error of +/- 1 standard deviation, these simulations would suggest that the number of schools above 50% FRL threshold will increase from the current 36 schools to between 37-50 schools. This increase, however, would be simply due to the number of schools increasing from 164 to 200. The percentage of schools above 50% would be forecast between 19-25%, which is consistent with the current figure of 22%, suggesting that the proportion of schools above 50% would be essentially the same. Data from Simulation #17 are shown in Figure 2 to illustrate. Comparing Figure 1 to Figure 2, the shape of the distributions are largely the same.

Figure 2

Simulation #17



**Summary**

In sum, the simulations indicate that, if we assume the same distribution of FRL percentages across schools in a 200-school district that we currently have in a 164-school district, the concentration of schools above the 50% threshold will remain essentially unchanged. While the total number of schools in that category will increase, it will strictly be a function of the overall increase in the number of schools, not a shift in the makeup of schools overall.

APPENDIX G

School Capacity, 2012-13 School Year