

Dear Chairman Margiotta, Members of the Board, and Superintendent Hargens:

On behalf of the individual members as well as the more than 40 partner organizations that comprise the Great Schools in Wake Coalition, I am hereby making a formal request that all future Board of Education committee meetings, including the Committee of the Whole, be moved to a venue that will allow greater public access to these important proceedings. This is consistent with procedures used by other elected bodies throughout Wake County and in keeping with the North Carolina Open Meetings Law.

The process by which tickets have been handed out for Board of Education meetings severely restricts citizen participation. We know of many who simply cannot leave their jobs or other responsibilities to obtain a ticket mid-morning and return to a meeting scheduled for late afternoon. Further, citizens who have been forced to stand in the hallways during meetings are completely shut out of the process.

Viewing the Committee of the Whole meeting from the boardroom via remote access has been problematic for citizens. It is difficult to both see and hear the proceedings, and there have been numerous interruptions in the broadcast. Additionally, the PowerPoint presentations are not visible; and handouts are not always available to the public. Meeting in the official boardroom offers a larger seating area where those attending can be more fully engaged in the proceedings.

In addition, we ask that you to move the COW and other committee meetings--specifically Policy, Student Achievement, Facilities and Finance--to the larger board room; again, the seating capacity of the conference room severely restricts public access to your meetings. You also should consider moving the full Board meeting to a centrally located, larger venue to encourage and support public participation.

In summary, the combination of the ticketing situation, the lack of adequate parking, and visual and auditory access to the meetings has had a chilling effect on public attendance. Creating an environment that encourages public participation will eliminate the need to have additional security and police officers present at meetings and will encourage meaningful engagement.

I know we all share a common desire for what is in the best public interest. I look forward to your response and action on this matter.

Sincerely,

Yevonne Brannon, Chair
Great Schools in Wake Coalition
A project of WakeUP Wake County