

Open Letter

February 2, 2011

Anthony Tata, Superintendent
Wake County Public Schools System
P.O. Box 28041
Raleigh, NC 27611-8041

Dear Superintendent Tata:

I am writing you this letter one day after the 51st Anniversary of the Greensboro sit-ins led by students and that changed the course of civil rights and racial segregation in this country. On behalf of the North Carolina State Conference of Branches of the NAACP, I welcome you to Wake County and extend our prayers in your new endeavor. We trust we can establish a strong working relationship as we address the critical problems many children in the Wake County Schools face. For those of us in the civil rights and progressive community, our questions for you and any leader of a public school system are simply these, "How will the policies that you and the board implement push forward the goals and ideals of having high quality, constitutional, well-funded, diverse, public education for every child? How will your policies work to eliminate racially identifiable, high poverty schools that are the enemy of student achievement? How will your policies hold together a commitment to diversity, a commitment to student achievement, and commitment to equity in resources, which are interconnected principles necessary for any real commitment to healthy/high quality schools?" We have been clear as to what years of research and history have said regarding the development of high quality public education. We must do the following:

- Stop Resegregation - Promote Diversity
- Provide Equity in Funding For All Schools
- Provide High Quality Teachers and Smaller Classrooms
- Provide High Quality Facilities
- Provide High Quality Leadership Teams in Every School
- Focus on Math, Science, Reading and History
- Promote Parental and Community Involvement
- Address Unjust and Disproportionate Suspensions, Dropout Rates and Graduation Rates Among African-American, Minorities and Poor Students

We trust you have read carefully our complaint to the U.S. Department of Education and that you will cooperate fully with its review of the Board's student assignments --which have already increased the amount of racial segregation of Wake's 142,000 students. We are monitoring carefully the federal investigation. We also believe your Board has been violating its own rules and the standards set by the Southern Accreditation for Colleges and Schools (SACS). We are monitoring the SACS review and trust you will cooperate with it also.

Again, we welcome and pray for you as you have been selected for this sacred position of trust with all the families in Wake County. We stand ready to help with any initiative that will improve student achievement and graduation rates, or stop the school-to-prison pipeline. We will use every means possible to stop and reverse actions that would dismantle Wake's nationally-recognized SES diversity policy. Now that you are officially superintendent, we would desire to meet with you as soon as possible. We are aware that how we work together and how we struggle against each other on basic policy disagreements will be watched carefully by all, including our children. We trust we shall all learn in the process. And that our children will learn the most.

Yours in Spirit of Truth, Justice and Equality,

/s/

Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II
State Conference President, NC NAACP
Board Member, National NAACP