

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Open Letter to Chairperson Ron Margiotta, Wake County Board of Education,
Superintendent Anthony Tata and the Public**

Postpone the Vote, Promote Unity, Prepare for the Future

As the Wake County School Board prepares to vote on a student assignment plan tomorrow evening, the North Carolina NAACP makes several observations that insist the school board postpone the vote:

1) A school board is supposed to set policy that will result in quality public education for all our children, not gamble away our children's education in order to promote narrow ideological agendas. Policy should be based on sound research, the law, and history. A school board has a sacred obligation to all our children. The ultimate goal should be providing a high quality, constitutional, well-funded, diverse public education for every child.

2) The proposed plan, whatever its color, being voted on tomorrow is based on hypotheses that have failed in other metropolitan areas. We like to say Wake County had a Gold Standard Plan. The Gold Plan, which has proven results and made Wake County's schools system a nationally recognized magnet for bringing businesses and parents to Wake County, will not be on the ballot tomorrow. Of course the Gold Plan, like any plan, needs updating and refinement from time to time, but it should not be discarded and thrown away. Its very success brought tens of thousands of young families to the county, overwhelming our space and teachers. Of course much of the staff's hard work and good new ideas can be incorporated into updating the Gold Plan. The proposed plan, however, is fundamentally flawed because staff was forced to ignore diversity, deny history and the best educational research, and dance around the critical issue of improving educational opportunities for all our children.

3) The school accreditation agency, AdvancED, found the current school board majority's 5-4 decision to dump the nationally recognized Gold Plan was a "premeditated act that destabilized the school system and community." The current majority's decisions were based on ideology rather than on solid educational research, best practices for all children, what is required by our Constitutions, and what history has taught us. A letter from Wake County GOP Finance Director, Marc Scruggs, to Mr. Margiotta on October 7, 2009 said, "Art Pope's plan the GOP implemented worked very well-and THANK YOU for your help and service...We don't have a solid game plan yet, but Art will be the architect."

4) The current majority's decisions have never been about busing. Their own statistics show that more than 99% of all Wake students live within 10 miles of their schools; 85% live within 5 miles, and the average bus ride is 17 minutes. Less than 3% of the students were bused based solely on socio-economic status under the old Gold Plan. Superintendent Tata now admits his new "Green-Blue" plan will increase busing costs. The Gold Plan's robust magnet schools presented many choices. By now promoting inner-city families' "choosing" the magnet schools in their neighborhoods, far fewer suburban middle class students have the choice to attend them, resulting in increasingly racially-identifiable schools.

5) There are two outstanding investigations prompted by complaints from the NAACP. The final decisions by these agencies -- AdvancED, and the U.S. Department of Education -- have yet to be rendered.

6) The NC NAACP sent a letter on July 8, 2011 with questions, unresolved issues and contradictions with the new plan, and to date none of them have been formally addressed or answered.

1. The percentage goals of minority, poor and low-performing students in each school have not been clarified.
2. The seat availability for parents who choose to send their students to magnet and so-called "achievement choice" schools is not clear.
3. We do not know how the school systems plans to address the issue of access for parents who may not have access to the necessary resources to wade through the online process to make choices for their children's school assignment.
4. There is still no urban school district operating a so-called "choice" plan that has maintained greater success than the socio-economic diversity and Healthy Schools assignment plan that irrefutably made Wake County a national model for student achievement.
5. There is still no data or grid to show how the current recommended plan will decrease or increase the number of racially-identifiable, high-poverty schools in Wake County.
6. It is still not clear whether the Wake County School System administration recognizes and understands that the high-poverty schools that came to be under the old plan were not a result of the plan but rather a result of unprecedented growth in numbers of students in Wake County.

7) Since the current majority came into office and took on its sacred duty to educate our children, the NAACP has advocated for eight fundamental principles to guide us in building and sustaining healthy schools and strong public education:

1. Stop resegregation and promote diversity
2. Provide equity in funding for all schools
3. Provide high quality teachers and smaller classrooms
4. Provide high quality leadership teams
5. Provide high quality facilities
6. Focus on math, science, reading and history
7. Support parental and community involvement
8. Address unjust and disproportionate suspensions and reduce dropout rates and increase graduation rates among African-American and other minority students

The decision before the Wake County School Board is one of great importance. Only one public hearing has been held, and a decision of this magnitude should have more. The results of the election and two investigations are unknown, and the plan could be changed within a few months, wasting the school system's time and resources. Last November, the Wake County School Board rushed through a vote to ditch the healthy school plan, abandon diversity, and move towards ideology rather than sound research. Let's not make the same mistake again.

Our recommendation is that, yes, the Wake County School Board should wait until the election is finally settled. The community is clearly saying that they want the persons making decisions for the future of their children's education to be willing to look at sound educational research, the law and lessons of history, which insist that diversity and resources are critical to student achievement.

Therefore we join the many community voices to say that the vote should be postponed, more hearings should be held, and we must do what's best for all our children.