

As chair of the Wake County Board of Education, it is my privilege today to report on the state of the Wake County Public School System. It is also an honor to talk about the outstanding work of our teachers and staff. Every day, sometimes far from the limelight, the men and women of our schools work tirelessly on behalf of our students. They touch our children's lives, and encourage them to develop habits of learning that will last for a lifetime. So let's begin this report with my deepest thanks to our teachers, staff and administrators who give so much for Wake County's children.

I also cannot begin a report on the state of our schools without praising our chief academic officer, Dr. Donna Hargens, who led the school system so ably as our interim superintendent. Dr.

Hargens, I once again thank you for your service in that role.

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In this report I would like to highlight just a few of the many accomplishments of our school board and school system.

In the fall of 2009, Wake County's voters called for changes in the policies and procedures of our school board. Since then, the conversations around our board table, and in our community, have been sometimes passionate, sometimes heated, and sometimes painful. That's completely understandable, because the stakes for our children and communities are high. But every single member of this board believes in our students, and wants a strong and supportive school system to do its best for them.

So these conversations will continue in our community. And it is my hope, that if we disagree, it can be done constructively and respectfully.

I hope that we can put our children's interests ahead of our own, and that we can make our decisions based on the best facts and data available to us.

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Since December, 2009, our board and school system have made progress in making our schools better for all children. For example, our board stood together in unity to fundamentally change our approach to long-term suspensions. For too long, we have been too quick to use that method of discipline, leaving our students without supervision or guidance. The streets are no substitute for a school. We are

changing our policies, developing alternatives, and finding other ways to keep our schools safe while keeping our students learning. I was proud of our board for standing together on this.

Our school board also approved the use of EVAAS as a data tool for our schools, and discontinued the use of the Effectiveness Index. This was important for two reasons. It consolidated our resources, and it helps our schools make more objective decisions. Thanks to the use of EVAAS, our schools are now enrolling more qualified low-income and minority students in eighth-grade Algebra I.

Both of these developments were driven by the hard work of the Economically Disadvantaged Student Performance Task Force. The members of that task force are a broad cross-section of our

community, and they are reviewing our policies, studying our test scores, and recommending other changes that will make our schools better serve lower-income students.

I want to thank all of the members of that committee and its chair, Mr. Tedesco, for taking this important leadership role.

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Among our other accomplishments this year, our school board has done the following:

- We have opened four new schools, completed major renovations at Wake Forest-Rolesville High and Wilburn Elementary, started construction at Rolesville Middle, and purchased a site for the new Rolesville High School.

- During the last difficult budget year, we implemented reductions with a minimum impact on classrooms. We're consolidating administrative buildings, and we've approved a new contract for cellular services that will save \$400,000 a year.
- We've cut the cost of contract transportation services, increased the efficiency of our bus system, and reinstated after-school activity buses.
- 54 students who are our first graduating class from the Wake Early College of

Health and Sciences walked across the stage, and we worked with North Carolina State University to start a new STEM early college of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Meanwhile, we supported providing Wake County parents with more choices by urging the General Assembly to lift the cap on charter schools.

- We approved school improvement plans for each of our schools, which parents and citizens can read online.

- We reinstated instructional time for students on Wednesdays, while maintaining Professional Learning Teams through other methods. We also approved consistent early release days for all schools.
- We used Race to the Top funding to include a Renaissance model, which will be used to reinvent four elementary schools with a performance composite below 60 percent.

And as a final note, we have begun the process of fulfilling our promises to our community to return proximity and stability to the student

assignment process in Wake County and we approved a resolution expressing our commitment to voluntary desegregation.

Our commitment is to a student assignment plan that strengthens student achievement, not weakens it. That strengthens communities, not weakens them. That strengthens parental involvement, not weakens it. These are, again, goals shared by every member of our board, and every citizen of good will in Wake County. It is my hope that the ongoing conversation will be constructive, and place our children first.

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Looking to the future, we have the most difficult budget year in recent history ahead of us. Once again we commit to protecting our classrooms

as much as we can, but there are more questions than answers at the state level.

We will continue to seek ways to involve the public, including public hearings and changes in times and locations for meetings. We will find ways to work with the County to reduce the costs of maintaining services. We will begin the planning for a potential school construction bond.

But the thing I am most looking forward to is the beginning of our work with our new superintendent, Tony Tata. Of the many strong candidates who came forward, it was Mr. Tata's many accomplishments and unique experiences that distinguished him. His lifetime of service and leadership, his ability to make decisions based on

data, and his ability to take charge of a complex organization, make him the right man for the job.

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The Wake County Public School System has a proud history of student achievement. We are confident that our new superintendent will respect that history while making the necessary changes to improve upon it. Too many students still struggle, or make poor choices, or drop out. All of us have much work to do, to make a difference for these kids. I'd like to conclude this report by asking our community to support our new superintendent, and support each other, to get the job done.