

## Superintendent's Midterm Report - Background and Additional Details

The Superintendent's Midterm Report to the Wake County Board of Education is an annual assessment of the progress and future direction of the Wake County Public School System.

### **Closing the Achievement Gap**

In the January 2008 report, Dr. Burns acknowledged that while WCPSS is a high-performing school district when compared to its peers and state/national averages, "even a plateau of good performance is still a plateau." WCPSS must welcome **purposeful change** by changing its process-oriented "focus on teaching and learning" to a results-oriented "focus on **learning and teaching**."

- Ninety-one percent of students in grades 3-8 perform at or above grade level in reading, a strong percentage, but one that has changed very little since 2003.
- Significant academic achievement gaps remain for economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency.
- WCPSS must further develop as a **learning organization**, embracing collaboration, community service, and expanded use of performance data.

### **Multi-year Assignment Plans**

With 134,000 students, WCPSS is the largest school system in North Carolina and one of the fastest-growing in the nation. We expect:

- 6,000 new students during 2007-08
- 6,400 new students during 2008-09
- 6,590 new students during 2009-10
- 7,200 new students during 2010-11

Assigning students to fill new schools is always a challenge, however the student assignment plan for 2008-09 will be the last one year plan presented. Multi-year student assignment plans will be possible by collaborating with:

- NC State's Operations Research/Education Laboratory which specializes in the use of mathematical models for improving decision-making in educational institutions and governmental agencies.
- Municipal and county planners.

A multi-year assignment plan will provide a greater level of stability and predictability for parents.

### **Retain, Recruit and Train**

Preparing for the future and developing new leaders is more important than ever.

- This year 13 percent of principals will be eligible for retirement.
- Twenty-five percent of our teachers will reach retirement age over the next five years.

We will need more qualified teachers and administrators in place to fill these vacancies and keep up with growth in the system. We have taken a number of steps to ensure that we are retaining, recruiting and training the best people.

- The Triangle Leadership Academy co-developed 40 seminars and trained close to 3,000 WCPSS employees.
- Recruiters travel to about 200 sites nationwide.
- More than 900 new teachers hired last year.
- Nearly 60 percent of new teachers recruited from other states.
- No-cost recruitment opportunities with Slippery Rock University, a nationally accredited teacher education college in Pennsylvania.
- Framework for succession planning model contains 10 unique training opportunities for teachers, assistant principals, and principals.
- Advanced study opportunities offered at Peace College, NC State University and East Carolina.
- Master of School Administration (MSA) Degree Program at NC State helps to retain 98 percent of WCPSS assistant principals.
- Professional Learning Communities (PLC) established at each school.

### **Fiscal Accountability**

WCPSS is committed to expanding fiscal accountability at all levels by raising expectations of staff, increasing system controls, streamlining fiscal policies and procedures. A number of transformations have taken place for the system to operate more efficiently.

- The Board of Education adopted the Undesignated Fund Balance Policy on Dec. 4, 2007 which includes three new provisions to guide its use.
- All vacant positions, budgets, and expenditures were reviewed by budget managers and senior finance and budget leaders during first quarter budget review meetings in October 2007.
- In November 2007 business cases were submitted in preparation for the 2008-09 Plan for Student Success.
- An Independent Audit Committee will provide continuous feedback to us as we develop business management solutions for greater efficiency.
- Internal auditors have conducted audits with schools to ensure they are in compliance with fiscal policies and procedures.

- All new budget managers are required to go through extensive training, including a certification test and ethics training.
- All existing budget managers are now required to go through ongoing training and recertification and ethics training.

### **Systems and Structures – Tools for Change**

To embark upon purposeful change, the right systems and organizational structures – or processes and procedures – must be in place to serve as the framework for how we go about our business of teaching and learning. These systems and structures serve as tools, enabling us to chart our course and help us better support our schools, ensure accountability and become more responsive to our community.

- Last year, we significantly realigned WCPSS, resulting in a more efficient and responsive organization.
- The hiring of the school system’s first Chief Business Officer has helped us become a more effective and efficient organization.
- Preparation for the next cycle of school improvement planning is underway. Each of our schools develops its own three-year plan in which they identify areas for improvement, set goals, identify key processes and establish action steps to reach their goals.
- Team-based collaboration is becoming an essential component of our organizational structure this year. Our schools and central services departments have begun operating as professional learning communities where teachers and staff make time to come together to collaborate and discuss ways to hold higher expectations for students, improve instructional practices, and increase student learning and achievement outcomes.
- Representatives of our teachers, principals, central services staff and parents regularly meet with the superintendent to discuss ways we can all work together to move our system to the next level.
- We are using the recommendations made by the Wake County Citizens Advisory Committee to improve school construction.
- A Transportation Policy Review Committee reviewed our existing transportation policies and procedures, considered safety concerns from parents and the community, and made recommendations for change.
- We held a series of community engagement meetings around the county to inform and involve the public in the student assignment process. Feedback was used to help develop the plan for 2008-09, and, for the first time, we are also developing a multi-year plan for 2009-2011.

### **Technology Refresh Program**

To compete in the new global economy when they join the workforce, students will need to be well-versed in modern computer technology. The Wake County Public School System is keeping pace. The first round of a five-year computer replacement program, funded by the 2006 bond referendum, has been completed.

- The schedule calls for 20 percent of the school-based computers to be replaced every year for the next five years.
- Between Oct. 22 and Dec. 21 of this year, 10,355 computers were delivered to 147 schools.
- About 2,000 of the computers being replaced may be able to be cleaned and re-deployed to schools.

### **Curriculum Management Audit**

On Sept. 4, 2007, the Wake County Public School System received the results of a comprehensive curriculum management audit conducted by an independent team of auditors. The purpose of the audit was to identify areas where the school system could improve its delivery of the curriculum in order to move the system and students to the next level academically.

Over the course of six months, auditors looked at how WCPSS manages its curriculum from the boardroom all the way down to the classroom. The Curriculum Management Audit – a 400-page report – identified some of the district’s challenges in delivering the curriculum and outlined eight specific recommendations for the board and administrative staff to consider:

- Opportunity - Meet the students’ needs equitably, and eliminate the achievement gap.
- Consistency - Unite strategic planning from the school board to the administration to the school to the classroom.
- Governance - Strengthen school board and administrative direction of the curriculum management.
- Management - Actively direct and support the curriculum.
- Evaluation - Increase the use of data in decision making.
- Budgeting - Tie school system resources to the needs of the curriculum.
- Instruction - Unify and enhance training and development.
- Organization - Clarify roles and responsibilities and increase effectiveness.

The system has begun responding to these recommendations by assigning each one to a team. These teams are headed by senior administrators who are responsible for developing plans of attack to implement the recommendations and making regular progress reports to the board.

The process will be a lengthy one and will certainly involve the community. As the school system begins to move forward, you may notice some small changes taking place immediately, while other changes will be more prominent and gradual, perhaps taking several years to adopt.

### **Purposeful Change**

Since Dr. Burns took office in July 2006, WCPSS's organizational structure has been streamlined along with a focus on fundamentals. With the January midterm report, this period of refinement and preparation ends. This is a long-term commitment to systematically strengthening what works and abandoning what does not.