

**Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education
School Choice Special Committee
Minutes
June 3, 2019
5:00 p.m.
Education Building Room 223**

Board Committee Members Present

Dana Caudill Jones, Vice-Chair
Lori Goins Clark
Deanna Kaplan

Board Members Present

Barbara Burke
Leah Crowley
Malishai Woodbury

Executive Cabinet Members Present

Brent Campbell
Donna Cannon
Trish Gainey
Dionne Jenkins
Alexandra Hoskins
Lionel Kato
Karen Roseboro
Kenneth Simington
Darrell Walker

Ms. Dana Caudill Jones, Committee Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 5 p.m.

Mr. Wayne Loflin, Chief Operations Officer, shared [an update on the transportation services](#) provided by the district.

WS/FCS moved to a 3-tier system in the early 1990s. Circa 1995, the district implemented “choice zones” with multiple bell schedules for elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Mr. Loflin also shared that there are about 100 students who board buses prior to 6 a.m. in the morning.

In 2005, magnet programs began without transportation. After some evaluation, Magnet Express Sites were implemented in 2007. Currently, we have 39 stops. The number of students utilizing the program has grown from XX in 2006-2007 to 2113 in 2018-2019. The number of buses needed has ranged from approximately 60 to approximately 94 buses (Overall fleet has ranged from 320 to 371 buses).

Magnet Express Coordinators provide supervision at the magnet stops and ensure that students are picked up. The salary/benefits for the program is \$200-\$350,000 annually.

Ms. Jones asked about the total cost of the magnet transportation program. Mr. Loflin responded that the district could re-allocate 94 buses without the magnet program. Mr. Darrell Walker, Assistant Superintendent of Operations, provided a history of the increase in wages in order to fill the vacancies.

Mr. Loflin showed a map of the spread of students who attend Atkins A&T High School, including those students who take advantage of the Magnet Express program.

Ms. Malishai Woodbury asked to see the map for Philo-Hill Magnet Academy. The map indicated that two students currently utilize the Magnet Express program.

Ms. Jones shared that low student usage may be part of a larger conversation about the effectiveness of magnet programs.

Mr. Loflin provided an explanation of the spreadsheet providing data around student ridership for 2018-19.

Mr. Walker indicated that the district is not a pure 3-tier system. It is closer to a 6- or 7-tier system due to the specialization of several programs. We will continue to struggle until we come up with a better system. We may need to contract some programs out, or we may have to discontinue some programs. We have a reputation for having the most complicated transportation system in the state of North Carolina.

Mr. Walker shared that we have a student who travels to and from Charlotte, due to our service to homeless and foster children (Project HOPE).

Ms. Jones asked about a modified magnet service. Mr. Walker shared that the district is exploring some contract models or public transportation usage. We're trying to figure out ways to meet the demands. We are very sensitive to the fact that students are impacted by the problems with transportation.

Dr. Kenneth Simington, interim Superintendent, indicated that Project HOPE has significantly grown over recent years.

Ms. Jones asked if the committee could spend some time discussing the "end game" for the work of the committee. She would like to give direction to staff regarding additional information needed when the Board returns in August. She is unclear about timeline for change; however, she is aware that there are some things that are difficult to manage.

Mr. Homan Atashbar, Director of Student Assignment, indicated that changes to policy would need to be in place in the fall of 2020 to accommodate the opening of Lewisville Middle School.

Ms. Jones stated that she would like to examine if we have the right magnet programs. That needs to be part of the conversation around choice. She asked the Chair if she would explain the end game of the committee.

Ms. Woodbury stated that she has conversed with Ms. Andrea Bramer, committee chair, to discuss committee goals. School Choice is a way for parents and students to get a personalized educational experience. We have to make sure that Choice doesn't create silos of extreme poverty or very high populations of one ethnic group. Long Term: How can we create a model for choice that is a good program for effective education? Short Term: Can we take a look at magnet programs and their effectiveness?

Ms. Jones indicated that the new middle school will need a zone for residential assignment. At some point, we will need to communicate that information far in advance. The previous Board scratched the surface of school choice prior to the election of the new Board. If the sheet is just blank, it's hard to get started. Would it be helpful to look at some of that previous work?

Mr. Atashbar provided some clarification about what data can be used to impact student assignment. If we are going to look at major change, it might be a good idea to get outside help. OREd, an organization affiliate with NC State University, did an in-depth analysis and prediction model for student assignment and location throughout the county.

Ms. Lori Goins Clark indicated that taking a look at that previous data would be a helpful refresher and for the new Board.

Ms. Jones asked about the models that could be applied. Dr. Simington asked the Board to provide criteria around building models. Ms. Woodbury clarified that certain information could be used to develop models, and Dr. Simington agreed.

Ms. Jones asked about getting information regarding the impact on different programs (e.g., transportation, child nutrition). Mr. Atashbar agreed that the impact could be provided based on the criteria.

Ms. Jones asked when would the Board need to communicate the criteria to give staff time to develop models, for the Board to consider models, etc. Dr. Simington responded that the scale is important in order to determine the timeline. Even to develop the residential area for a single school will impact all of the contiguous schools.

Mr. Atashbar shared some of the considerations when building models, such as neighborhoods and transportation. He also indicated that addressing the residential assignment for Hanes is a necessary task.

Ms. Leah Crowley asked about evaluating the middle school residential assignments for schools in the west or south of the county. Dr. Simington indicated that there are impacts across the county.

Ms. Jones requested clarification for the intention of the committee around looking at all middle school residential areas as well as the effectiveness of the middle school magnet programs.

Dr. Simington indicated that staff could provide a survey around establishing the criteria for re-designing the residential areas.

Ms. Woodbury asked about the implications of only addressing some rather than all middle schools. Mr. Atashbar indicated that he could be prepared to share the data in August and have models in September.

The Board members present indicated that they would prefer to look at redesigning the residential zones for all middle schools.

Ms. Barbara Burke clarified the intention of looking at a comprehensive picture of middle schools.

Ms. Jones adjourned the meeting at 5:53 p.m.