

Understand Your Schools:

- Assigning Students to Their Closest Schools
- The Role of Magnet Schools in Wake County
- Creating Stability and Balance in Wake County's Schools

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Rotary Club

June 23, 2010

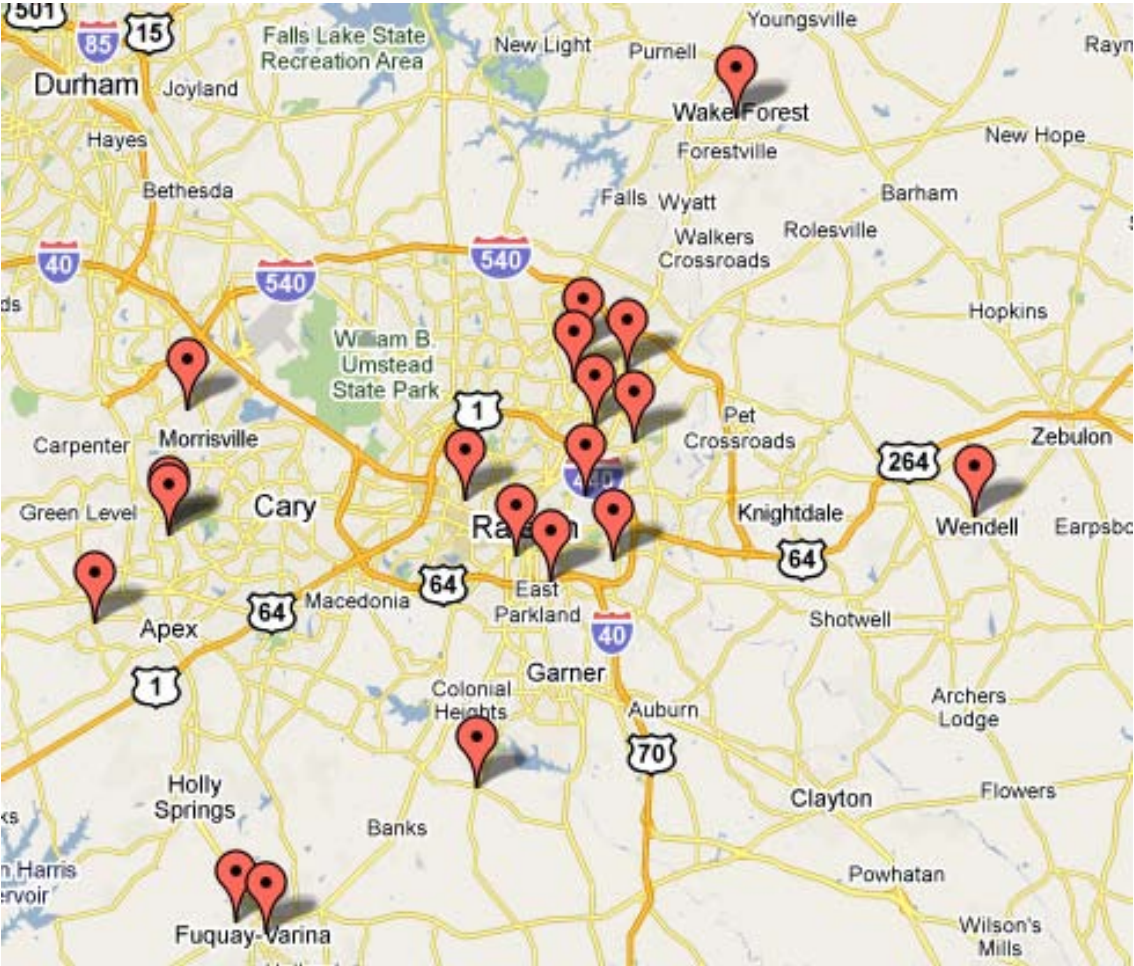
Closest Schools

On March 23, the Wake County school board passed a resolution establishing community-based assignments. The resulting assignment plan puts an emphasis on allowing families to attend schools as close to home as possible.

Is it possible for every child to attend his or her closest school?

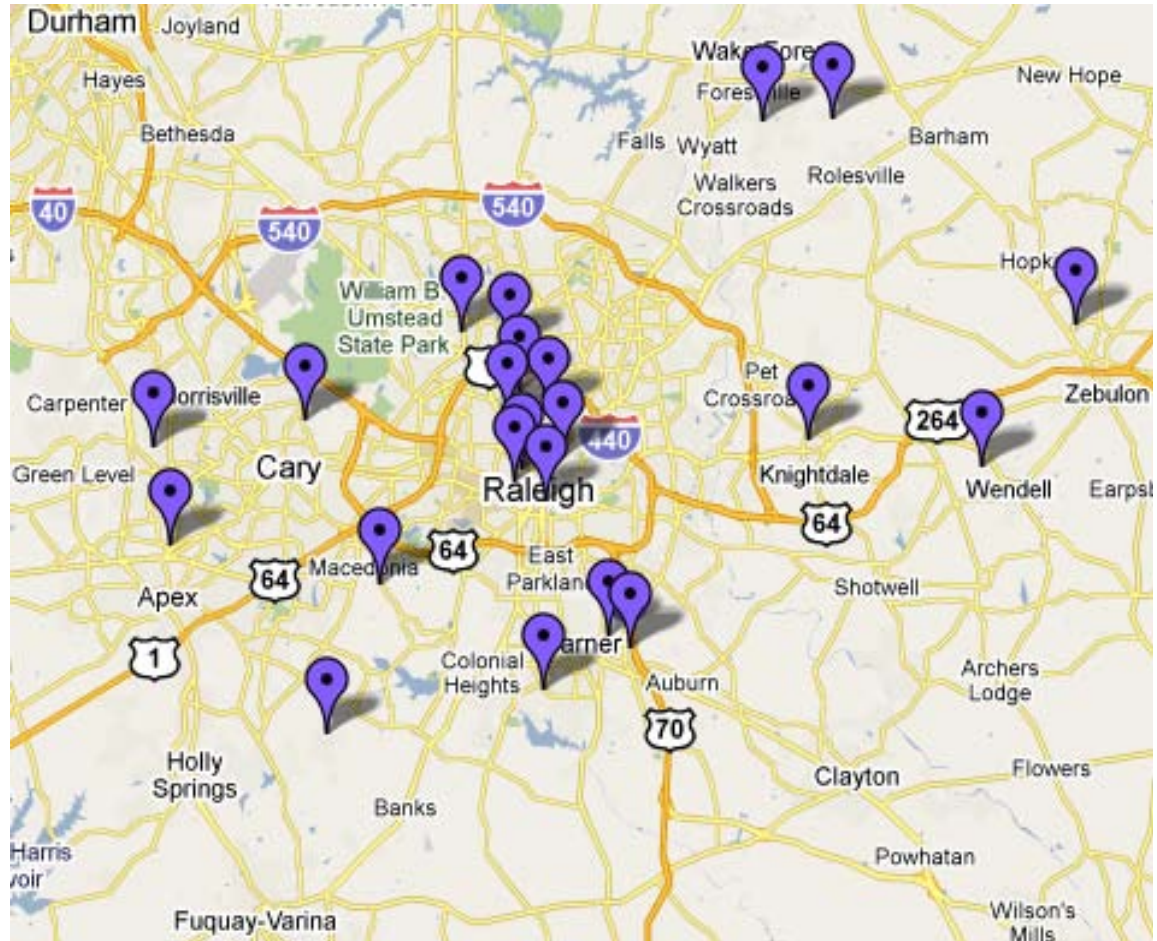
If all students are assigned to neighborhood schools...

19 buildings would be at or greater than 150% capacity.



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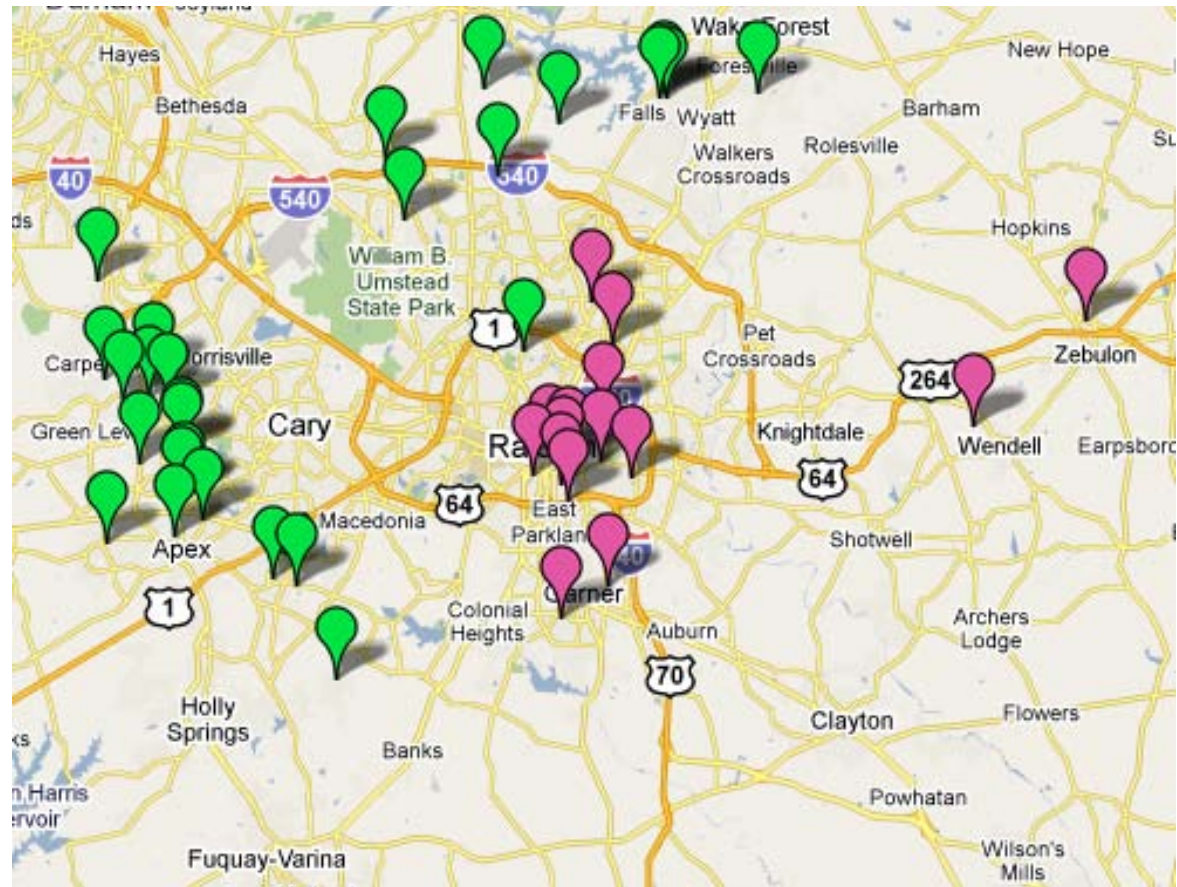
More than 20 buildings would be at less than 50% capacity.



If all students are assigned to neighborhood schools...

In at least 15 schools, two of every three students would qualify for free or reduced lunch. (*pink*)

At the other end of the range, 27 schools would have a student body where fewer than 10% of the students were poor. (*green*)



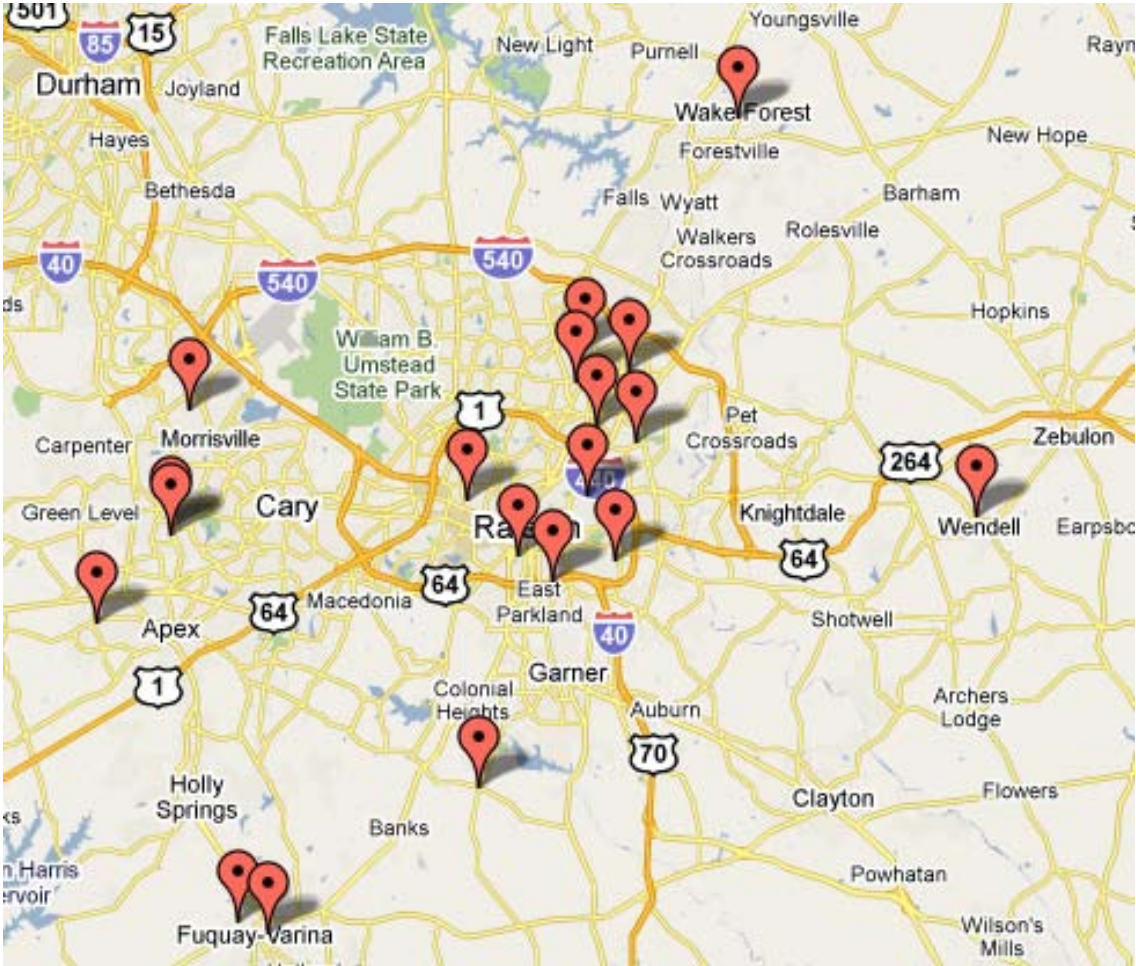
Understanding the Details: Neighborhood Schools

It's logical to think that a neighborhood school assignment would leave many downtown schools half empty and suburban schools severely crowded.

But many downtown schools would exceed capacity.

If all students are assigned to neighborhood schools...

19 buildings would be at or greater than 150% capacity.



Understanding the Details: Neighborhood Schools (*cont'd*)



Schools marked in red exceed 66% F/R. Those with dotted red markers exceed 66% F/R and 150% capacity. Schools with yellow markers are less than 50% capacity and would likely receive students moved from overenrolled poor schools.

Understanding the Details: Suburban Growth

Issues of concentrated poverty are largely absent from closest school assignments outside the beltline. But assigning students close to home creates many of the same capacity problems.

Western Wake

Cedar Fork Elementary

Davis Drive Elementary

Davis Drive Middle



>150% capacity

Wake Forest Elementary > 267% capacity

Understanding the Details: Suburban Growth (*cont'd*)

Anticipating growth is problematic.

- Lake Myra Elementary (Wendell) – planned and approved development fell apart. It now operates well under capacity
- Panther Creek High (Cary) – over capacity within two years of opening

Magnet Schools

Understanding the Details: Magnet Schools

Today's magnet school program has gone through numerous changes since it was introduced in 1982, but two basic goals have remained the same – to fill seats that would otherwise go empty while creating a more diverse student body.

The magnet program has remained an effective tool for achieving both goals even as the system has grown to 140,000 students.

Understanding the Details: Magnet Schools (*cont'd*)

Filling Empty Seats

Neighborhoods often go through cycles where children graduate and parents wait for years to sell their home to younger families.

Magnet programs offered some hope that enrollment could be held stable.

Martin Middle, Joyner Elementary, and Wiley Elementary are located in older neighborhoods. While these neighborhoods aren't poor, many of the families have aged out of the school system.

Understanding the Details: Magnet Schools (cont'd)



Current WCPSS Magnet Schools

Yellow = Elementary Blue = Middle Green = High

Promoting Excellent Public Schools For All

Understanding the Details: Magnet Schools (*cont'd*)

The role of magnet schools in a community-based assignment plan will ultimately decide how many schools have high concentrations of poverty. Magnets play an extremely important role.

Excluding alternative schools, the system currently has four schools where the percentage of low-income students meets or exceeds 66%.

Brentwood Elem. (Raleigh)

Creech Road Elem. (Garner)

Smith Elem. (Garner)

Wakelon Elem. (Zebulon)

Understanding the Details: Magnet Schools *(cont'd)*

Magnet schools with different themes could be distributed equally among assignment zones, but the result would be a magnet program in name only.

What is lost in that approach is the opportunity to create an assignment plan that provides both stability and balance.

Why It Matters: Student Achievement

The achievement levels of poor students in Wake County *are* unacceptable.

Some might suggest the scores are predictable given that Wake County spends less than the state average and less than the national average per student.

Regardless, there is no good reason for a system with Wake County's talents and resources to post such scores.

Why It Matters: Student Achievement (*cont'd*)

But raising test scores was never a stated goal of the magnet program. The goal is to provide “equity in educational programs.”

In layman’s terms, that means making sure students in poorer parts of the county aren’t stuck in schools with lower standards and less qualified teachers.

Balance improves the odds of academic success, it does not guarantee it. Academic success is the result of good teaching.

Why It Matters: Teacher Quality

- Education Trust (2004) – Large differences exist between the qualifications of teachers in the highest-poverty and highest-minority schools and teachers serving in schools with few minority and low-income students.
- 1999-2004 – The Metro Nashville Public Schools moved to a neighborhood- based student assignment policy. Even with additional resources for high-poverty and high-minority schools, more experienced, better paid teachers moved away from schools with high percentages of poor and/or minority students. (Houck, 2010)

Choice and Equity

Despite its benefits, magnet programs provide an inherent benefit for some middle-class families that is not available to all students.

By placing magnet programs where they can best fill seats and encourage socio-economic balance, schools are by default too far away from families in the outer reaches of the county to be of much value.

Understanding the Details: Choice and Equity



Current WCPSS Magnet Schools

Yellow = Elementary Blue = Middle Green = High

Promoting Excellent Public Schools For All



Choice and Equity

In effect, a trade off was built into the system. Those who live closer to poorer parts of the county have more choices. Those who live in more affluent suburban areas can attend schools that are consistently above average.

But this imbalance has been a point of friction for much of the past 20 years, largely because the county developed much faster than anyone ever envisioned.

Choice and Equity (*cont'd*)

With careful planning, it is possible to offer choices to more parents without removing the pull of other magnet programs. But magnets by their nature are not about offering the same choices to everyone.

All families should have choices. All families cannot have the same choice. That would defeat the goals of a magnet program.

The missing component for families in the suburbs is a sense of stability, something magnet parents need not worry about.

Stability and Balance



School Assignment

The goal of any assignment plan in Wake should be one that helps create high student achievement by providing balance and stability.

In the next 9-15 months, input from the community, school system staff and other government planning and zoning officials will be used to develop a zone-based assignment model.

Stability and Balance – Key Issues

It is not possible to create a plan that relies solely on neighborhood schools.

It is difficult to attract and retain experienced teachers and principals in high-poverty schools.

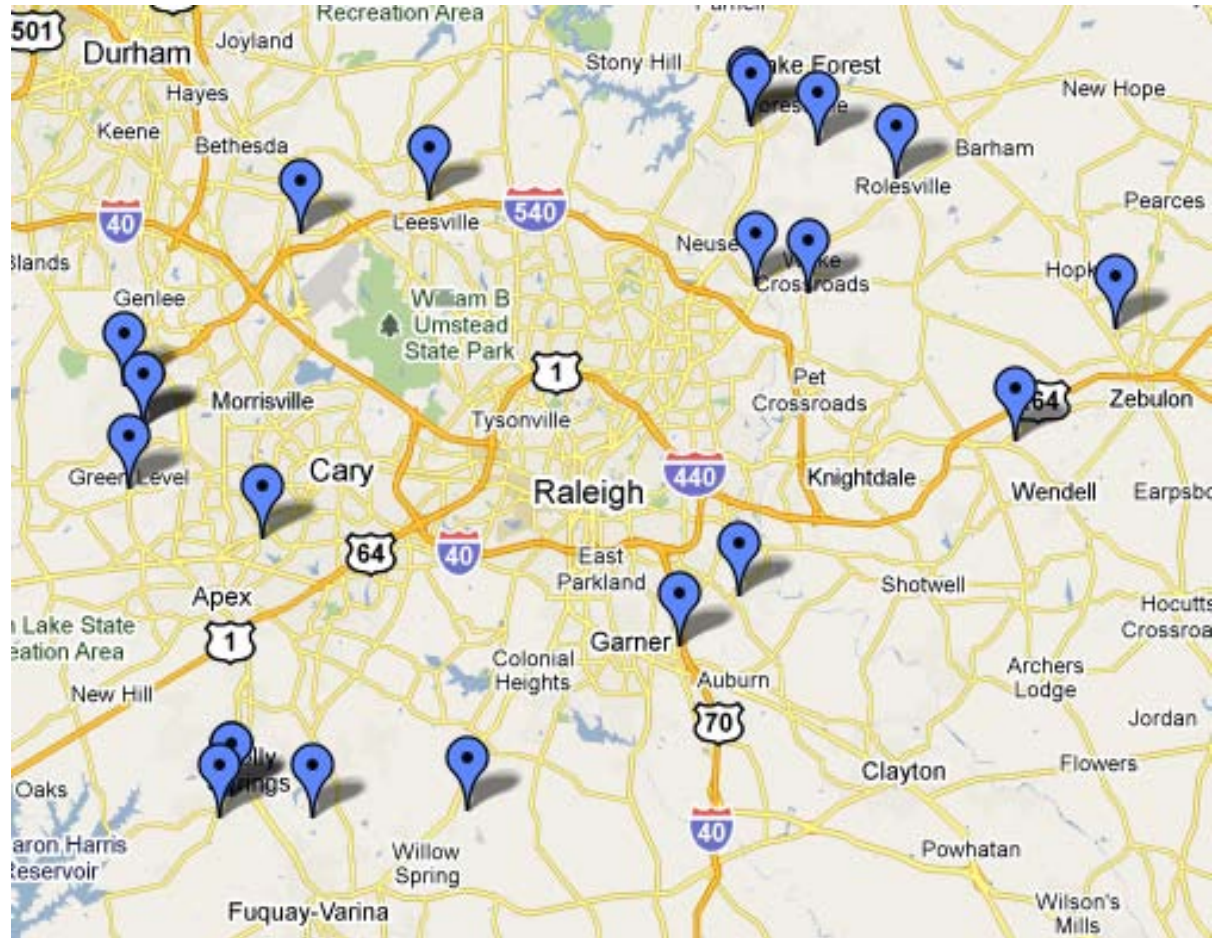
Magnet schools must play a role, and must provide choice among those who live well beyond the 440-Beltline.

Stability and Balance – Key Issues (*cont'd*)

Growth drives reassignments.

Between 2000-2009, Wake added more new students per year than the entire student enrollment of 48 other NC school districts.

Wake opened 21 new schools since 2006.

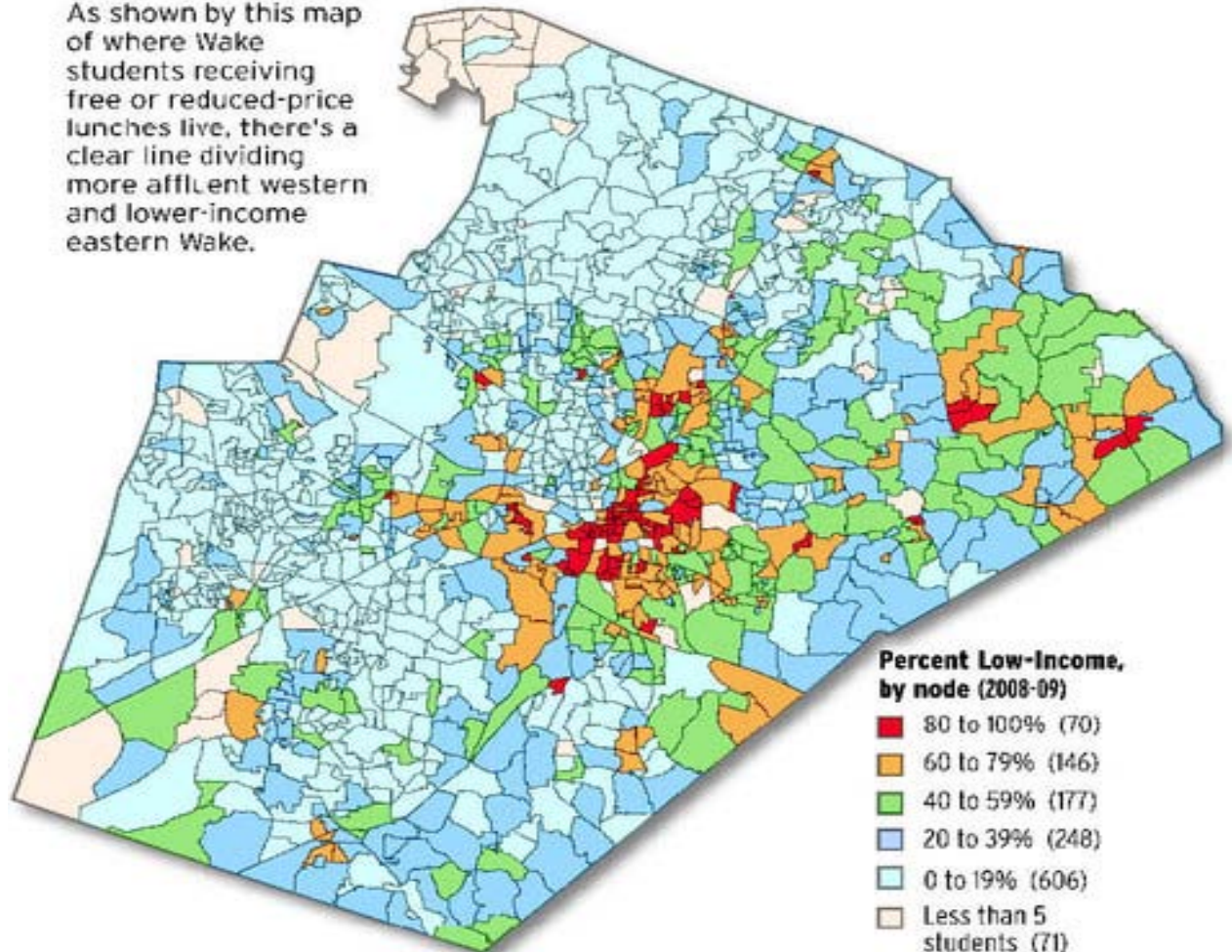


Stability and Balance – Key Issues (*cont'd*)

The focal point of discussion about balance will be east Raleigh, north Garner, and a large section of eastern Wake County.

WAKE'S DIVIDE: INCOME IS BIGGEST BARRIER

As shown by this map of where Wake students receiving free or reduced-price lunches live, there's a clear line dividing more affluent western and lower-income eastern Wake.



Stability and Balance – Key Issues (cont'd)

The one issue that will make or break almost any assignment plan is parental choice.



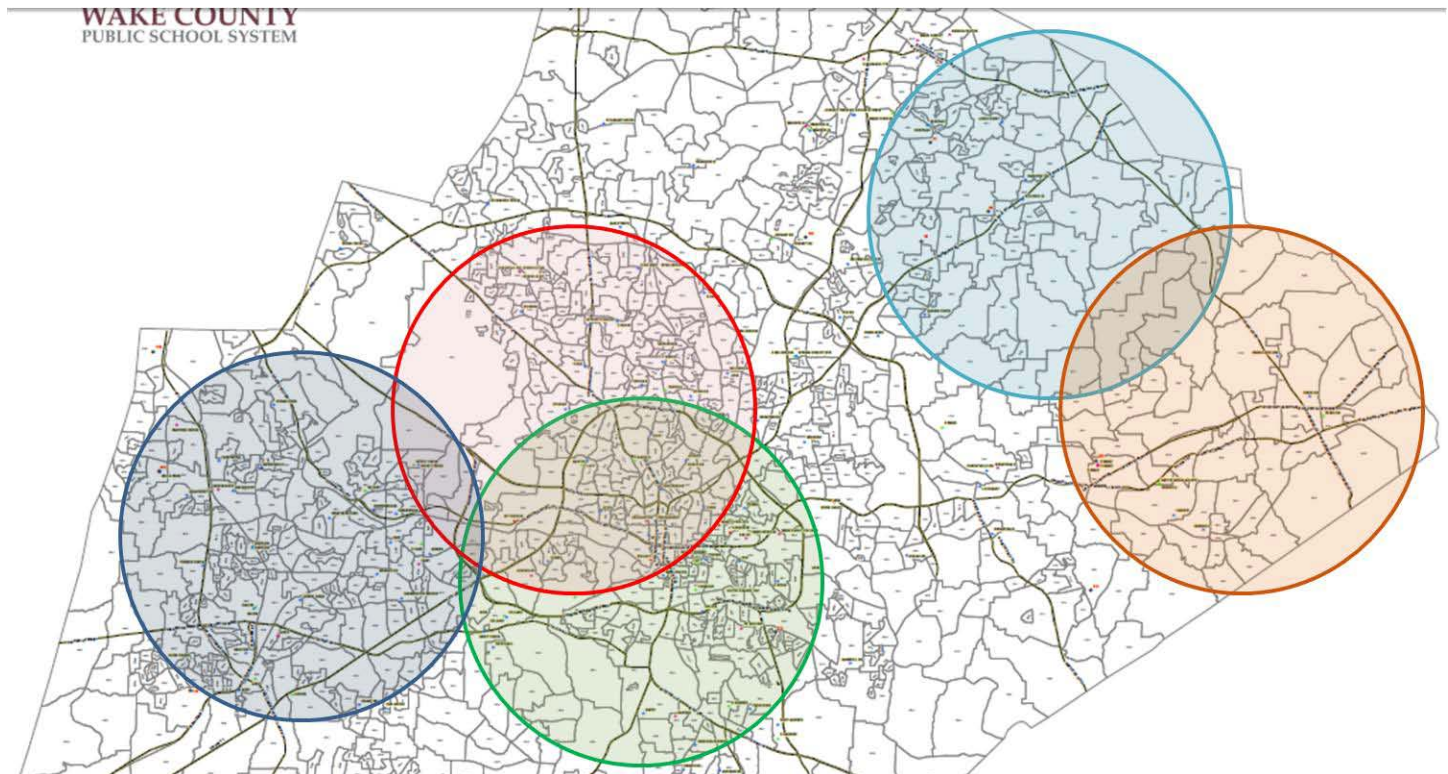
Current WCPSS Magnet Schools

Alternatives

- 1) Changing the Current Model
- 2) Choice Plans
- 3) Clusters
- 4) Managing Growth

1) Changing the Current Model

Overlapping assignment areas would define choices and create a stable assignment area.

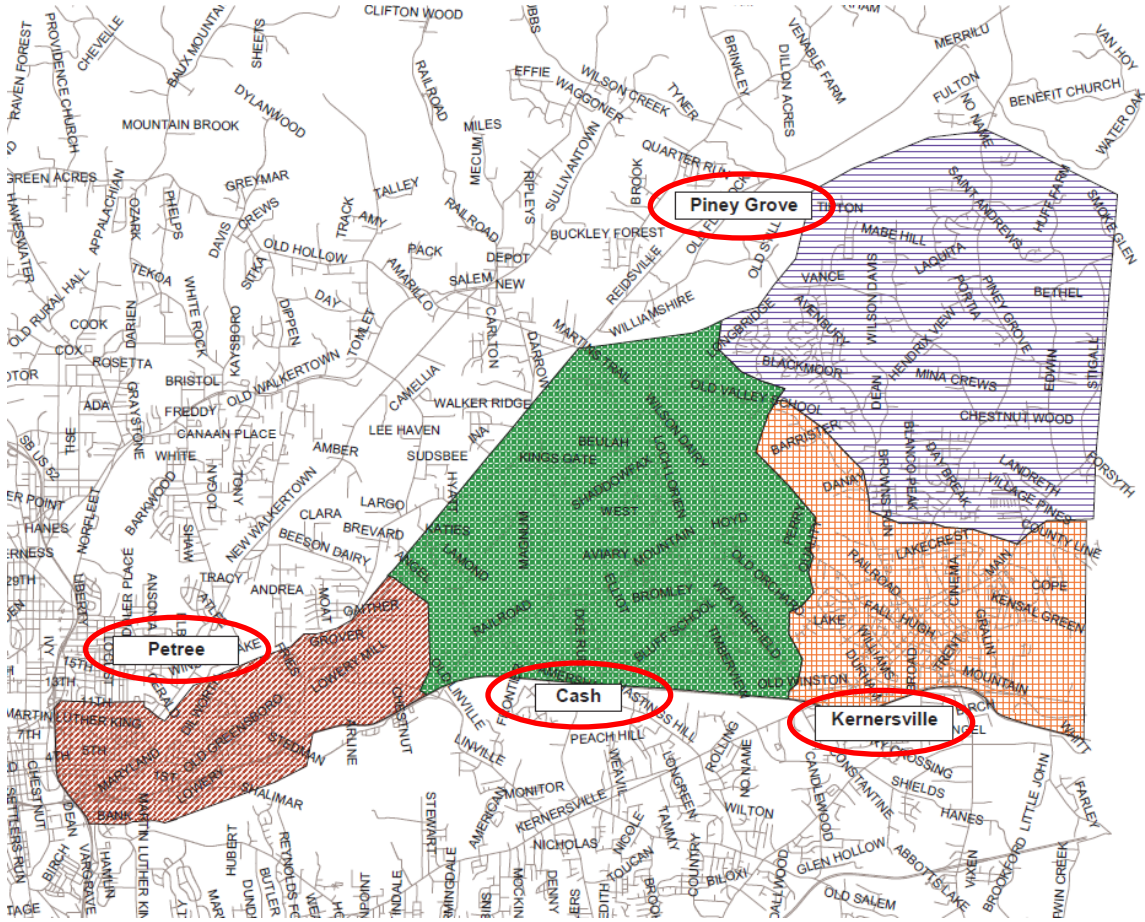


2) Choice Plans

Winston-Salem/ Forsyth
County Schools

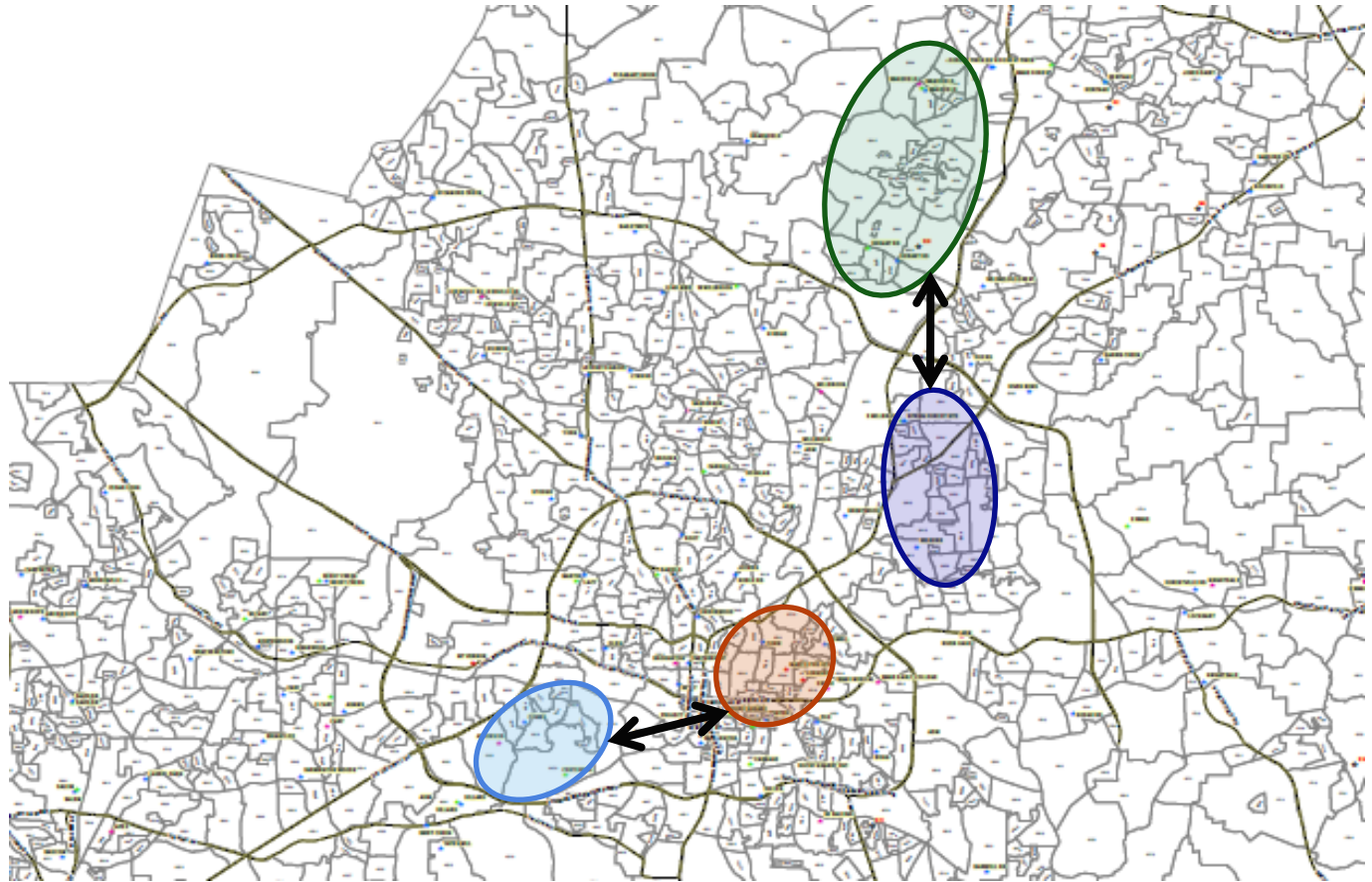
Elementary Schools:
Zone 2

Most plans begin by
breaking the district into
regions or zones and
then give parents
choices within each
zone.



3) Clusters

Schools in two areas are paired to create an overall balance.



4) Managing Growth

1990-2010

- At least one school opened every year

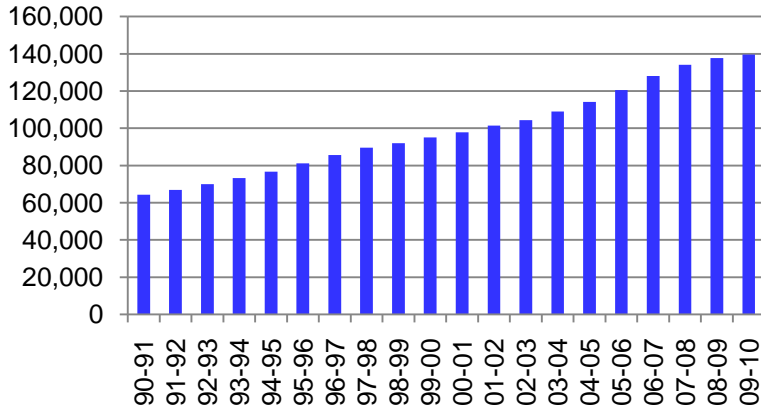
Year	Enrollment	# of Schools	# of Added Students
90-91	64,243	81	
91-92	66,915	83	2,672
92-93	70,052	90	3,137
93-94	73,192	91	3,140
94-95	76,731	97	3,539
95-96	81,203	100	4,472
96-97	85,539	104	4,336
97-98	89,548	108	4,009
98-99	92,038	111	2,490
99-00	95,018	112	2,980
00-01	97,853	117	2,835
01-02	101,397	118	3,544
02-03	104,373	121	2,976
03-04	108,970	122	4,597
04-05	114,068	133	5,098
05-06	120,504	137	6,436
06-07	128,072	145	7,568
07-08	134,002	153	5,930
08-09	137,706	156	3,704
09-10	139,599	159	1,893

2005-2010

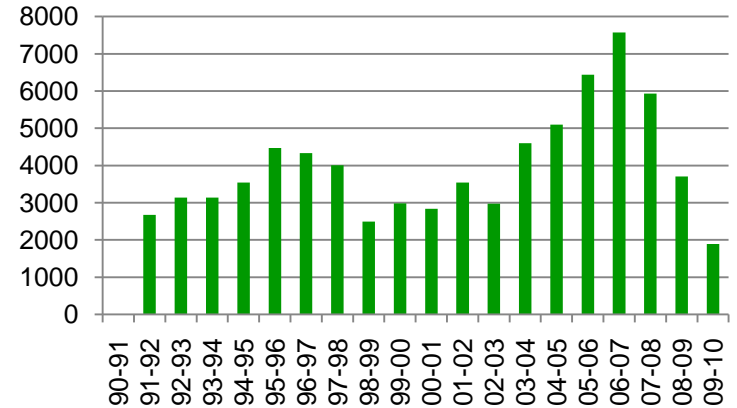
- 22 schools
- 19,095 students

4) Managing Growth

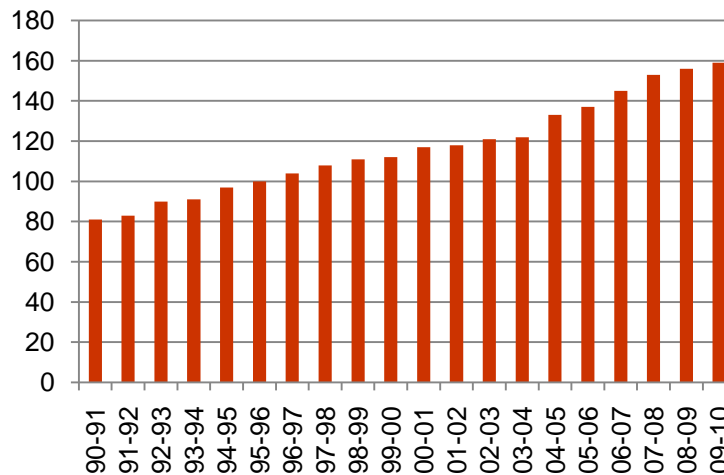
Enrollment



of Added Students



of Schools



2005-2010

- 19,095 students
- 22 schools

1990-2010

- At least one school opened every year

4) Managing Growth (*cont'd*)

Mobile classrooms

Pro: fastest (12-14 months), most straightforward

Con: 8-unit total cost \$830,000; single-unit cost \$88,000. Delays permanent solution

Cap enrollment

Pro: extremely effective at short-term stability

Con: extremely disruptive for long-term planning

Fill new schools more slowly

Pro: stability for incoming classes

Con: increases amount of unused space, limits choices at new school

Future Issues

Financial costs must be obvious.

Computer simulations need to be run.

Community involvement and transparency will ensure success.



For More Information

Wake Education Partnership

<http://www.wakeedpartnership.org>

Understand Your Schools – Topic Reviews

In Context – Newsletter



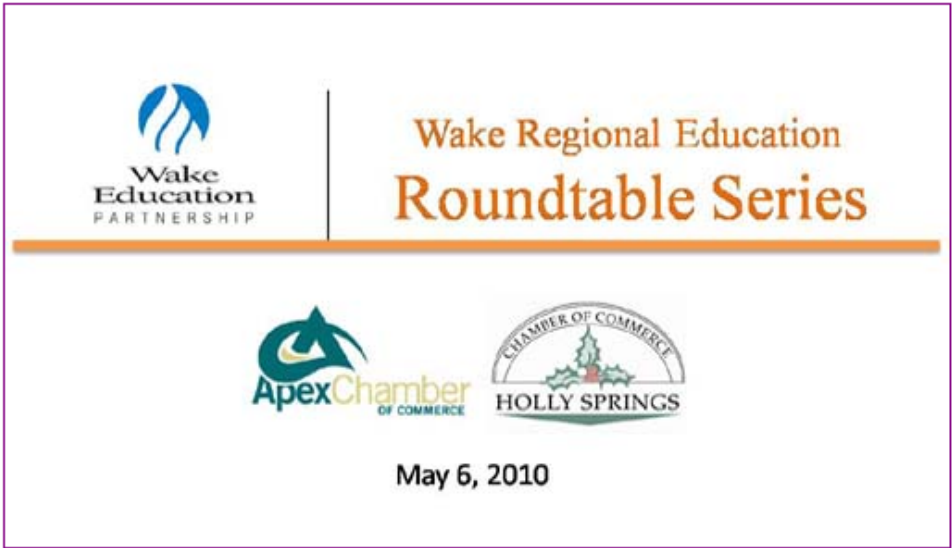
Promoting Excellent Public Schools For All

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- Newsletter: *In Context*
- Topic Reviews
- Press releases

April topic review: "Creating stability and balance in Wake County"



Wake Regional Education Roundtable Series

Apex Chamber of Commerce

Chamber of Commerce Holly Springs

May 6, 2010



SUSPENDING DISBELIEF

WORLD-CLASS PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR ALL

We know what a world-class school system would look like in Wake County. [Click here to see it.](#)

Learn more about the issues affecting your schools. A list of topics and times can be found [here](#).

In Context



Any further questions?

