



Assigning Students to Their Closest Schools

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A majority of the Wake County school board is interested in a student assignment plan allowing families to attend schools as close to home as possible.

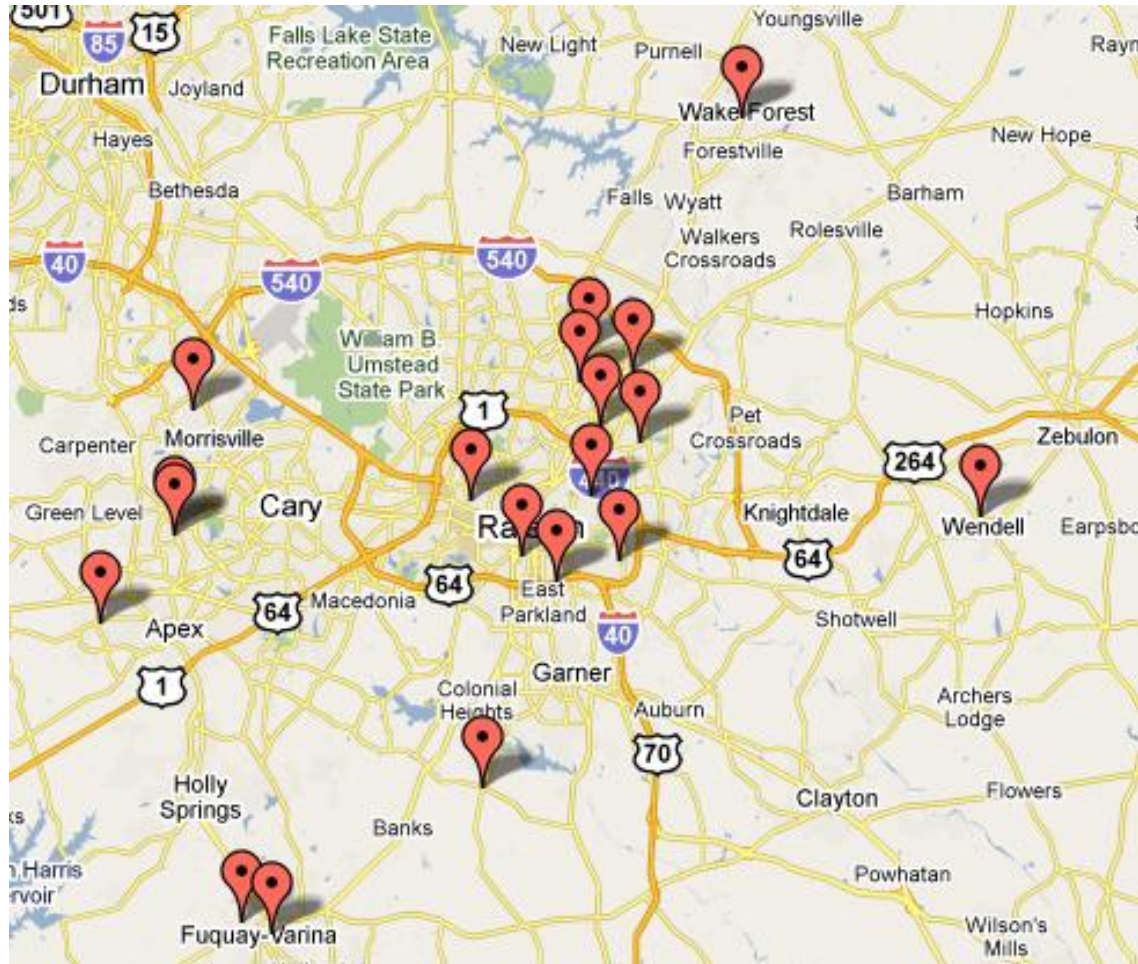
What effect might this approach have on individual schools?

The Partnership does not endorse any particular plan.

The intent is to build an understanding of this issue, one guaranteed to attract intense interest in the coming year.

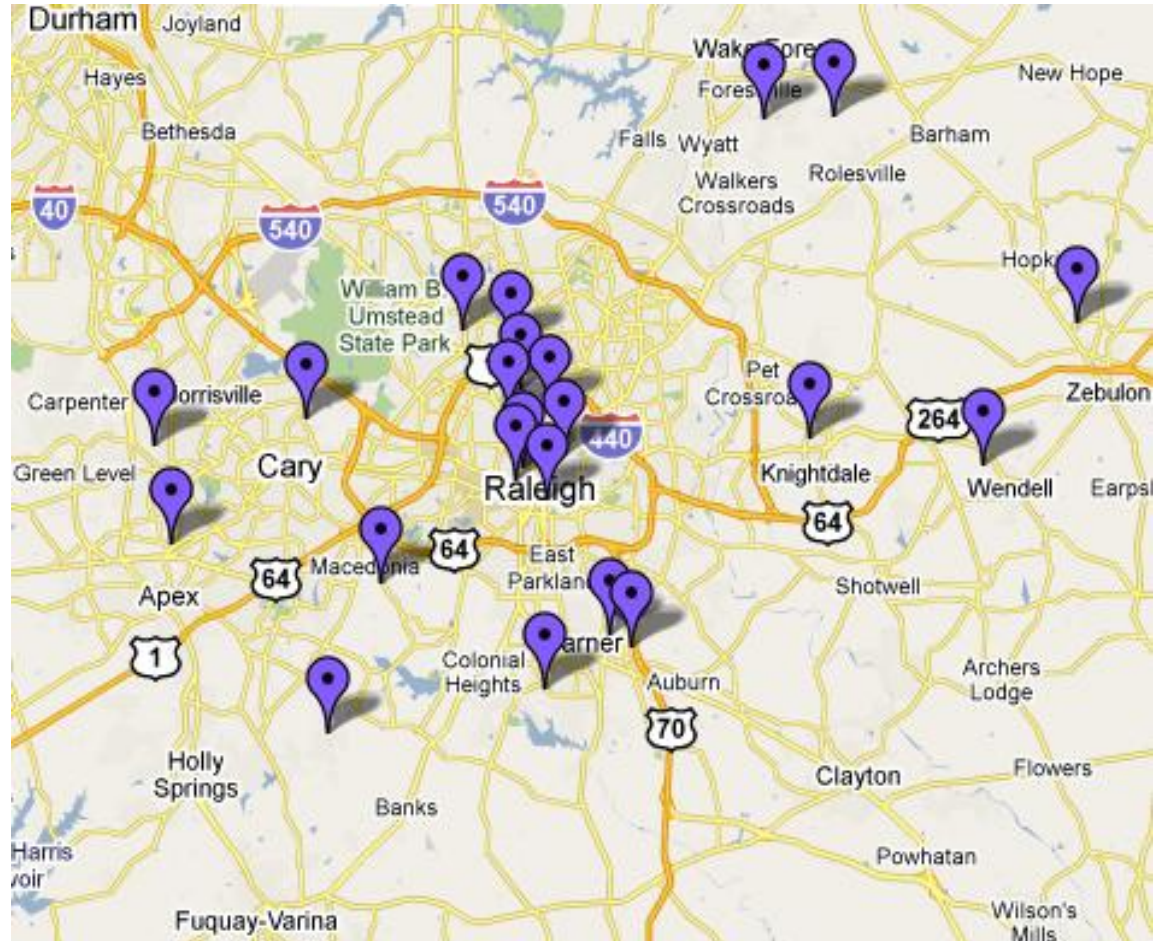
If all students were assigned to their closest schools...

19 buildings would be at or greater than 150% capacity



If all students were assigned to their closest schools...

Over 20 buildings would be at less than 50% capacity



If all students were assigned to their closest schools...

The socioeconomic balance of schools would change significantly.

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)



Some parents believe “neighborhood schools” means all children will attend their closest school.

The new school board majority knows this is not possible. There simply aren’t enough seats where they’re needed.

And, enrolling all students at their closest school would require, literally, tens of thousands of reassignments.

The school board is committed to providing more choice to parents.



Understanding the details: Magnet Schools

Magnet schools are currently used to fill schools and attract middle-class families.

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

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

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

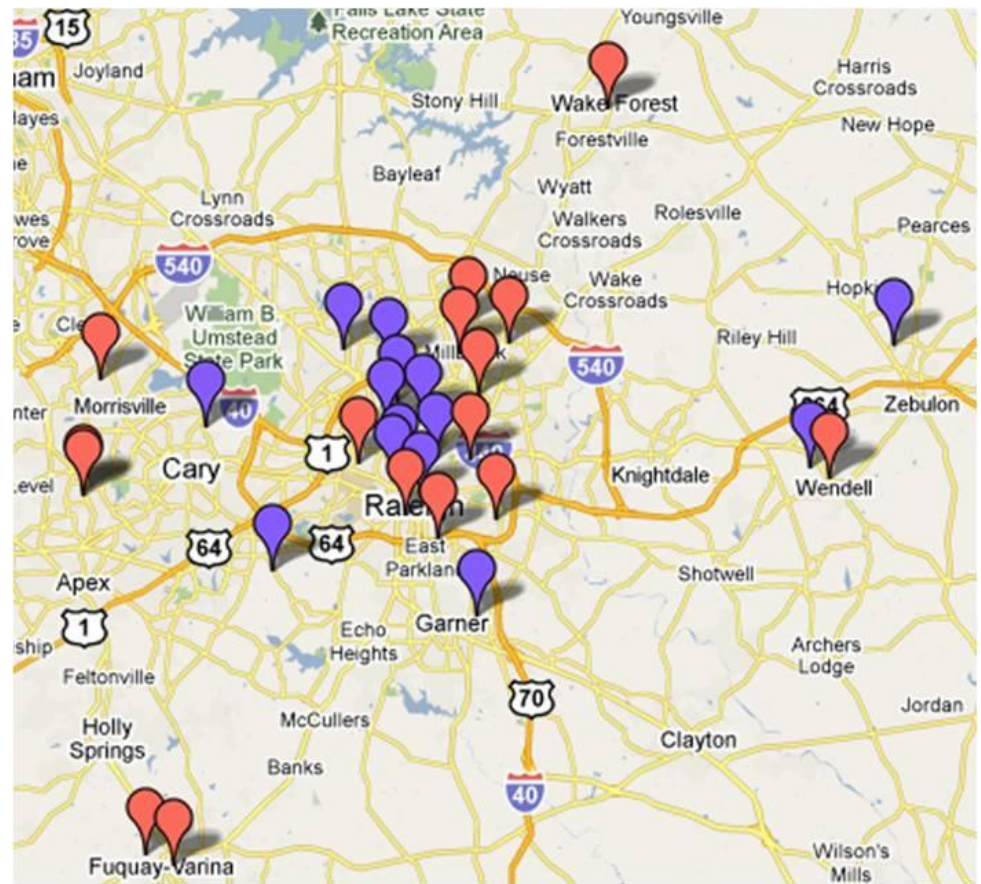
But many downtown schools would exceed capacity. In order to attract middle-class families to downtown magnet programs, some of the poorer children who live closest to the magnet school are assigned elsewhere.

A closest school assignment would result in a greater concentration of poor schools inside the beltline.

Powell Elementary: 193% capacity with 90% of students from low-income families.

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

Schools marked in red, including several high-poverty schools located downtown, would exceed 150 percent of capacity if students were assigned to their closest schools. Those marked in purple would be at less than 50 percent of capacity. If students were moved from their overenrolled downtown schools to the next closest school that was under capacity, it would create at least 20 high poverty schools in the system.



Understanding the details: Neighborhood Cycles

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.

Current WCPSS
Magnet Schools

Elem. – yellow
Mid. – blue
High – green



Understanding the details: Neighborhood Cycles (*cont'd*)

Sometimes the magnet works well.

- Douglas Elementary
- Carnage Middle
- Enloe High
- Southeast Raleigh High

Other times, it isn't enough to counter the effects of aging neighborhoods, especially those with heavy concentrations of low-income families.

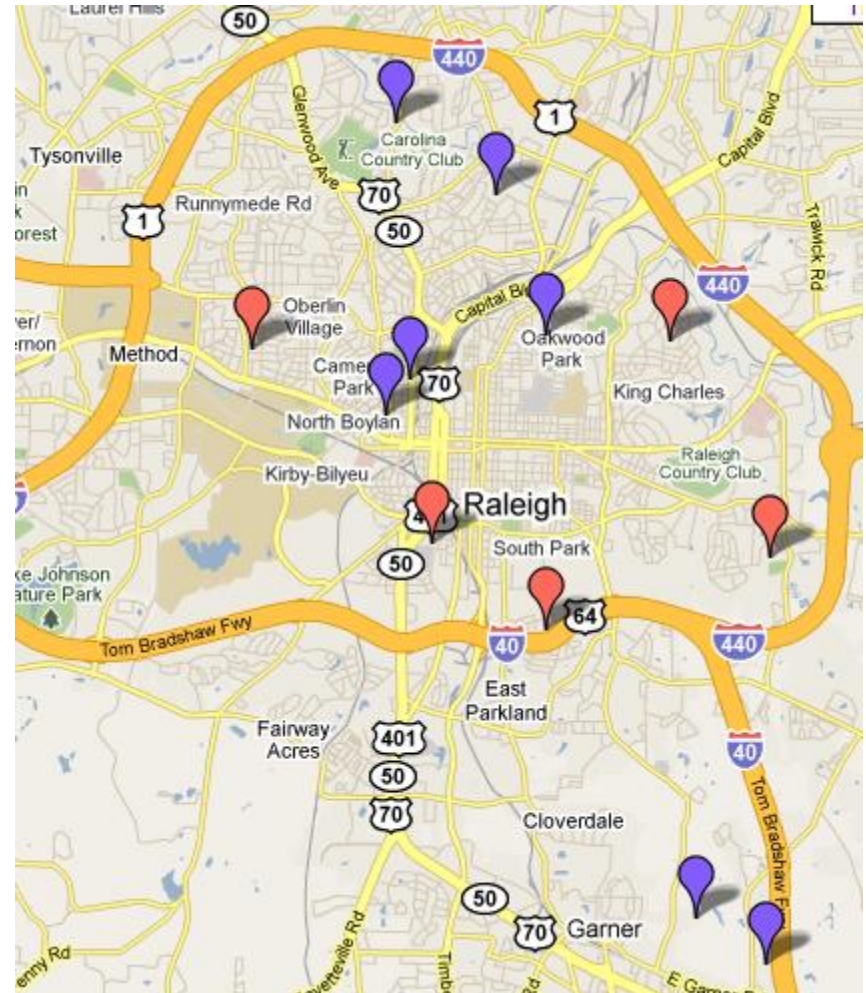
- Brentwood Elementary
- Smith Elementary
- East Garner Middle

Understanding the details:
Neighborhood Cycles (*cont'd*)

Assigning students to their closest school, however, would remove the effects of magnets. Older neighborhoods would be left disproportionately poor, under capacity or both.

Schools most affected if students downtown were assigned to their closest schools with any overflow distributed to nearby schools that are severely underenrolled.

Red = over 150% capacity
Purple = under 50% capacity



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.

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 also problematic.

Lake Myra Elementary = planned and approved development fell apart. It now operates well under capacity

Panther Creek High = over capacity within two years of opening



Next Steps

The makeup of any given school has an effect on how educators approach the job.



Next Steps (*cont'd*)

A host of academic studies argue that school quality has a direct and positive influence on residential property values.

Research shows that, holding all else constant, homes in high-performing school districts sell for higher prices than homes in low-performing districts.

The impact can measure in the thousands of dollars and increase home values as much as fourteen percent.



Next Steps (*cont'd*)

Increased school spending has been linked to significant increases in real estate values.

People are more willing to live in a neighborhood with good schools even if it means paying higher taxes.

The link between public schools and property values has been demonstrated in neighborhoods of high and low income ranges, in urban and suburban areas, and for homebuyers with and without children.



Community Based School Assignments – Resolution

