



# Parent Matters

W C P S S P A R E N T N E W S L E T T E R



## Superintendent's Column

When it comes to teaching and learning, there are two relationships that are absolutely vital.

One is the relationship between teacher and student. The most important thing a school system can do to ensure a child's academic success is to provide a high quality teacher and then *support* that teacher. Strong teachers build strong connections with their students, recognizing their individual needs. Helping teachers maintain those connections through a healthy school environment and professional development opportunities is a responsibility I take very seriously as superintendent.

The other relationship — the subject of this *Parent Matters* newsletter — is between the home and the school. Parents or guardians and teachers best promote academic success when they are able to positively reinforce each other. When there are open lines of

(continued on page 7)

## Curriculum Management Audit will Help Move WCPSS from Good to Great

On Sept. 4, 2007, the Wake County Public School System learned 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 and 117 action steps for the board and administrative staff to consider.

The system has already started to respond 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 key to successfully implementing the eight recommendations included in the audit report will be patience! 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. As staff tackles each of these action steps and recommendations, the overall goal is to bring more consistency, accountability, and support to the district, and above all, providing more opportunities for our students.

If you'd like an in-depth look into the Curriculum Management Audit's full report, it is available on our website at [www.wcpss.net/curriculum-management/](http://www.wcpss.net/curriculum-management/).

### OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1: Opportunity**

Meet the students' needs equitably, and eliminate the achievement gap.

**Recommendation 2: Consistency**

Unite strategic planning — from the school board to the administration to the school to the classroom.

**Recommendation 3: Governance**

Strengthen school board and administrative direction of the curriculum management.

**Recommendation 4: Management**

Actively direct and support the curriculum.

**Recommendation 5: Evaluation**

Increase the use of data in decision making.

**Recommendation 6: Budgeting**

Tie school system resources to the needs of the curriculum.

**Recommendation 7: Instruction**

Unify and enhance training and development.

**Recommendation 8: Organization**

Clarify roles and responsibilities and increase effectiveness.

## Getting Involved – Parents

In order for the Wake County Public School System to realize its vision of ensuring that every child educated in our school system graduates on time, prepared for the future, the entire community must work together in support of education. Parents play a leading role in the education of our students. When parents get personally involved in education, their children do better in school and grow up to be more successful in life.

Parental involvement can take a number of different forms. Some parents may have the time to get involved in many ways. Others may only have the time for one or two activities. But whatever your level of involvement, remember: *If you get involved and stay involved, you can make a world of difference.*

Parental involvement in education can mean:

- Checking homework every night,
- Making sure your child gets to school on time and is prepared,
- Maintaining a home environment that supports learning and literacy,
- Joining the local library with your child,
- Modeling positive behavior,
- Getting involved in your PTA,
- Attending school functions,
- Discussing your children's progress with teachers,
- Voting in school board elections,
- Helping your school to set challenging academic standards,
- Limiting TV viewing to no more than two hours on school nights,
- Becoming an advocate for better education in your community and state,
- Insisting on high standards of behavior, or
- Registering to serve as a volunteer in your child's school.

Or, parent involvement can be as simple as asking your children, "How was school today?"

For those interested in becoming a school volunteer, you can get more information and register by contacting your local school, calling Toni Cooper, Coordinator of Family Involvement & Outreach Services at 858-3239 or by visiting our website at [www.wcpss.net/volunteer](http://www.wcpss.net/volunteer).



## Success Series Helps Students Prepare for Exams

The *Success Series* is a collection of multi-media lessons, taught by master Wake County Public School System teachers in Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra 2, AP Statistics, and AP Calculus. Students can access the *Success Series* on DVD through their math teacher or download segments from the WCPSS website at [www.wcpss.net/success-series/](http://www.wcpss.net/success-series/).

Each course set contains a series of lessons that are aligned to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. The lessons on each *Success Series* DVD provide additional support for students who may need extra help with a concept or may have been absent. The typical lesson in the *Success Series* lasts from approximately 6 minutes to just under 15 minutes. The lessons afford students the opportunity to review concepts prior to a test or to acquire additional examples for a deeper understanding of concepts covered during the regular school day. This individualized approach to content review enables students to focus on areas of greatest need.

Currently, the *Success Series* contains lessons for math courses with End-of-Course exams or Advanced Placement exams. However, anticipate lessons in Biology, United States History, and Civics and Economics to be available by the end of the school year.

For further information, contact Athena Kellogg, Senior Administrator Secondary Mathematics, at [akellogg@wcpss.net](mailto:akellogg@wcpss.net).

## Community ALP Program

The Community ALP (Accelerated Learning Program) is designed to provide tutorial support, at no cost, to Wake County Public School students who are experiencing difficulty successfully scoring at proficiency levels on the North Carolina End-of-Grade tests.

The school system hires certified staff to provide academic support in reading and mathematics. The teachers provide tutoring to students who attend after-school programs in various Wake County community centers.

This school year, Community ALP will operate in 10 community center sites. The participating community sites are Avent Ferry United Methodist Church, Western Boulevard Presbyterian Church, Boys Club on Raleigh Boulevard, Girls Club on Raleigh Boulevard, Boys and Girls Club at Washington Elementary, Brentwood Boys and Girls Club, Salvation Army on Wake Forest Road, Walnut Terrace Community Center, Zebulon Boys and Girls Club, and the Hispanic Family Center at St. Raphael's Catholic Church.

Please contact Tracy Moseley, program administrator, at 858-1628 for additional information.

## Magnet Programs Bring Innovation to Wake Schools

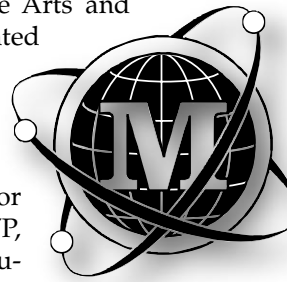
The Wake County Public School System will host its annual Magnet Schools Fair on Saturday, Nov. 3 at Southeast Raleigh Magnet High School from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. Families interested in exploring their educational options should check out the innovative programs offered through the network of magnet programs.

Magnet schools enhance the North Carolina Standard Course of Study with innovative approaches to learning that empower student learning. At magnet schools, students are able to participate in educational experiences that open doors of opportunity and spark the imagination of students, preparing them to become responsible citizens in a global society.

Our network of magnet schools offers families a choice of instructional

programs such as Creative Arts and Science, Gifted and Talented with the AG Basics Program, International Studies, Active Learning & Technology, International Baccalaureate, Center for Spanish Language/IBYP, Leadership, Montessori, Museums, University Connections, and Center for Leadership and Technology.

Magnet schools, offering a varied menu of innovative programs, are used by the system to help create and maintain a healthy school system. Magnet programs help make optimal use of all school facilities and raise standards for the whole district by making innovative programs accessible to all students. Magnet programs' use



of choice helps to create diverse student populations, promoting respect for other cultures and enriching the learning experience.

Families interested in learning more about magnet programs may come by the Magnet

Resource Center located on the campus of Millbrook Magnet Elementary School, visit the magnet website [www.wcpss.net/magnet](http://www.wcpss.net/magnet) or call 501-7900. The Magnet Resource Center is open each day from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m., and has information about the various magnet programs. Families are also invited to attend parent information sessions held the first Tuesday of each month at 10 a.m. at the Magnet Resource Center.

## Online Scholarship Guide Provides Valuable Information

Financial assistance is a major concern for most students who plan to continue their education beyond high school. The Wake County Public School System's Online Scholarship Guide allows students and parents to access information about available scholarships, covering a wide range of academic disciplines and eligibility requirements.

The site contains scholarships announced through the high school's Counseling and Student Services Departments. Scholarship name, discipline, value, eligibility criteria, approximate due date and contact are given for each scholarship.

The online guide also includes tips on how to get scholarships and information about financial aid.

Visit the Scholarship Guide online at [www.scholarshipplus.com/wake](http://www.scholarshipplus.com/wake).

For additional information on planning, applying and paying for college, visit the College Foundation of North Carolina's website at [www.cfnc.org](http://www.cfnc.org).

## End-of-Grade and End-of-Course Test Dates

The North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) tests are administered to all students in grades 3-8 statewide at the end of the school year to assess whether they are making adequate progress.

The North Carolina End-of-Course (EOC) tests are administered to students to assess their knowledge of subject-related concepts as specified in the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. Currently, students enrolled in the following courses are required to take the EOC tests: Algebra I, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Civics and Economics, English I, Geometry, Physical Science, Physics, and U.S. History.

### TRADITIONAL CALENDAR SCHOOLS

EOG – May 19-23

EOC – June 4-10

### YEAR-ROUND CALENDAR SCHOOLS

EOG – Track 1: May 12-16; Tracks 2-4: June 9-13

EOC – Last two weeks of the course

### MODIFIED CALENDAR SCHOOLS

EOG – May 12-16

EOC – Dec. 12-18; May 27-30

### 4X4 BLOCK CALENDAR SCHOOLS

EOC – Jan. 11-17; June 4-10

### WAKE EARLY COLLEGE

EOC – Dec. 13-19; May 16-22

You can view the complete testing calendar for all schedules online at [www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research/reports/calendars/t\\_calendars.html](http://www.wcpss.net/evaluation-research/reports/calendars/t_calendars.html).

## Online Distance Learning Provides Options

While not new, virtual education is becoming more commonplace. Most institutions of higher education have ventured down the e-learning path — from limited course offerings to full blown diploma granting. Now, high school credit and even high school diplomas can be earned online. The concept of anytime, anywhere learning is becoming the norm — even here in North Carolina. This past summer marked the opening of North Carolina’s Virtual Public School.

So, what are some of the reasons people turn to online learning, especially while in the K – 12 setting? Here is a list that you probably can add to:

- Desire to “try” an online course
- With the growing use of online learning, the opportunity to gain experience
- Resolve scheduling conflicts at school
- Provide flexibility for students with family or work related commitments
- Courses of interest may not be offered at the “brick and mortar” school
- A need to make up a credit
- A desire to move ahead with coursework at an accelerated pace
- Medical conditions that may not allow students to be present at a “brick and mortar” school

Having a valid, driving reason to take an online course is the first step in laying a foundation for a successful virtual learning experience. Now that you have an idea of some of the needs met by and reasons for online learning, what do you need to know to help guide your student as they have more and more e-learning options available? Keep in mind that online learning is not for everyone.

Answer the following questions about the prospective online student:

- Is the student computer literate? While advanced computer skill is not a requirement, basics such as using e-mail and the Internet along with keyboarding skills are needed. Lack of these basics can cause problems that are not related to course content and may lead to frustration.
- Does the student have regular, easy access to a computer with Internet connection? Remember the term, “anytime, anywhere.” Limited access, may lead to a student not having sufficient time to meet course requirements. Again, this frustration is not associated with course content and must be avoided.
- Has the student been involved in making the decision to take an online course? This may seem like a silly question to some, but the student must exhibit a strong personal commitment in order to be a successful online learner.
- Is the student self motivated? Since most online learning is done anytime and asynchronously, the student must be an independent, organized learner who is able to manage his or her time.
- Does the student have effective written communication skills? The overwhelming majority of online learning requires the use of e-mail, discussion boards and other written assignments. Writing skills are essential.

For information about the North Carolina Virtual Public School, log onto [www.ncvps.org](http://www.ncvps.org) or see the Distance Learning Advisor at your student’s school.

## Foreign Exchange Program Enriches Wake County Schools

Every year, the Wake County Public Schools Foreign Exchange Program works with non-profit organizations to allow students from all over the world to study in our high schools. This year, a record number of students has been approved for placement in our district. Fifty-nine students, representing 19 different countries, will enrich our high schools by providing Wake County students with an opportunity to learn about life outside of the United States.

Students interested in spending a semester or year of high school abroad should contact the Dean of Student Services at their high school for a list of organizations and local representatives. A complete list of foreign exchange organizations can be found at [www.csiet.org](http://www.csiet.org). Plans for study abroad in the 2008-2009 school year should begin this fall.

## A Teacher's Journal: Learning to be Safe Online

By **BILL FERRITER**, SIXTH-GRADE TEACHER, SALEM MIDDLE SCHOOL

While it is not a part of my required language arts and social studies curriculum, I recently spent a good chunk of time talking with my students about Internet safety. As a tech-driven teacher, I feel strongly that there could be no more important lessons for students to learn in today's day and age.

Interested in what we talked about?

Then check out this collection of resources and advice that I posted on our classroom website:

### INTERNET SAFETY RESOURCES

There is no arguing that the World Wide Web has given you the opportunity to become smarter — and to have a lot of fun while doing so!

But at the same time, the Web can be a dangerous place too. You might come across people who don't have the best intentions and who can hurt you. They may be kids your age who decide to try to bully you or they may be adults pretending to be your age — which is even scarier. Because the Internet is largely an anonymous place, anyone can pretend to be anyone. The person who IMs you pretending to be a 12-year-old student at a local school might really be a 32-year-old person who lives in the next town over.

So how do you keep yourself safe? How can you continue to use the neat tools of the Internet without having to worry about those with bad intentions?

You constantly think about Internet safety. You never use your real name, give anyone your address, post the names of your brothers or sisters or school, or pair a picture of yourself with details about your hometown. You also NEVER reply to anyone that contacts you digitally unless you personally know who that person is in real life.

If someone tries to IM you saying that they know one of your friends, be suspicious. If someone suggests that you meet in person, be really suspicious. And if someone asks you not to tell your parents about something you're planning, be REALLY, REALLY SUSPICIOUS!

Want to learn more about Internet Safety? Then check out these sites.

They're some of the most important websites you'll visit during the course of the next year:

#### NETSMARTZ

<http://www.netsmartz.org/>

This site was put together by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children — and it is the most valuable site included on this list. It includes resources for students across all grade levels. Most interesting are a collection of videos that talk about the dangers of unsafe Internet practices that are targeted for use with middle school and high school students. Each video comes along with a companion "activity card" that serves as a viewing guide and a reinforcement tool. Sections that include valuable information for parents and for teachers are also included.

#### ONLINE SAFETY GUIDE FROM GET NET WISE

<http://kids.getnetwise.org/safety-guide/>

This guide — put together by a coalition of Internet service providers and computer companies such as Dell and Microsoft — is designed to break down Internet safety issues for parents, teachers and students. It includes separate sections and guides for children and parents of different age and grade levels. It also includes a list of the different kinds of Internet tools that kids are using (social networking sites, instant messaging, e-mail) and the risks associated with each. Finally, it includes a searchable list of the kinds of tools available to parents and families interested in keeping their children safe at home.

### A CRUCIAL CONVERSATION

<http://www.blogsafety.com/thread.jspa?threadID=110000013>

This is the text of a conversation with a 14-year-old girl about her Internet use that reveals how unsafe and unaware some children are about the importance of staying safe online. In it, she discusses her own personal social networking site and her online habits. Many of them are highly risky. Then, this child's mother is interviewed, revealing her unawareness of her daughter's online practices — and her struggles as a parent to juggle her child's growing independence and need for privacy with her responsibilities to protect her child. This is certainly a "must read" for any middle school parent that is interested in increasing online safety in his/her home.

### THINK BEFORE YOU POST VIDEO

This TeacherTube video — produced by the Center for Missing and Exploited Children — challenges you to think about what happens when you post your own picture online. I hope you'll think about this video before posting images of yourself on social networking websites like MySpace. That's a dangerous practice that many kids never think about.

### THINK BEFORE YOU POST WEBSITE

<http://tcs.cybertipline.com/knowthedangers8.htm>

This website was designed by the Center for Missing and Exploited Children to accompany the video listed above. It includes a wide range of information on how to keep yourself safe in a variety of different digital locations. You can learn about safe e-mail, IM, chat room and MySpace practices.

## Middle and High School Planning Guides Online

Planning guides for middle and high school parents and students can be found online at <http://www.wcpss.net/cass/counseling/>. These guides provide parents and students with valuable information about what is expected of students at each grade level.

The Middle School Program Planning Guide provides general information about middle school including information on the middle school program, the grading system and information for students with special needs. In addition the guide describes the core academic program for each grade and describes available electives.

At the high school level, individual planning guides are available for each year. The freshman guide provides details to help students make the transition to high school and includes information on important dates, learning the block schedule, calculating your GPA, graduation requirements, End-of-Course tests and driver's education.

The sophomore guide reminds students of gradua-

tion and promotion requirements and provides information on good study habits, time management skills, tips for exploring different career and college pathways and help assembling information and activities for their high school resumes.

The junior planning guide focuses on planning for college and offers a junior year planning checklist and information on how students can simplify their college search, visit college campuses and apply for financial aid. The senior guide is titled, The Post Secondary Planning Guide and provides valuable information for all seniors whether their post-secondary plans include college, work, or the military. The guide provides spe-

cific information including websites for national tests and information on transcripts and scholarships.

Your individual school counselor is available to assist you with any questions that you may have about information contained in these planning guides.



## SAT Readiness Program Helps Students Prepare

The College Board's SAT Readiness Program™ prepares students for the SAT and is the only online course developed by the test maker. It's personalized, comprehensive, and available anytime, anywhere.

The SAT Readiness Program™ is available to all Wake County Public School system high school students free of charge. Students should check with their school's SAT readiness coordinator for access information. A list of coordinators for each high school can be found on the WCPSS website at [www.wcpss.net/sat\\_help/contacts.html](http://www.wcpss.net/sat_help/contacts.html).

The SAT Readiness Program™ includes 18 interactive lessons that cover the new SAT math, critical reading, and writing sections. There are 3 practice tests and over 600 questions — all following proprietary new SAT specifications. Students will receive detailed personalized feedback on all practice tests and quizzes. To further assist with preparation, students are provided with explanations of answers to all questions in the online course. Students can practice for the new essay section by responding to essay questions and receiving immediate feedback. For more details, visit

### SAT TEST DATES FOR 2007-08

**November 3**  
**December 1**  
**January 26**  
**March 1**  
**May 3**  
**June 7**

the College Board Website at [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).

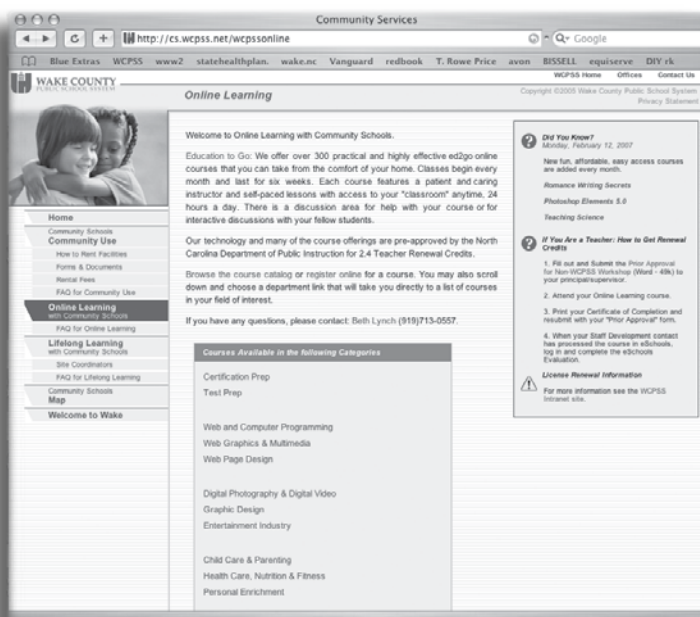
## Learn Online During Track OutTime

Track out time can also be fun learning time. Children, parents and teachers can take online courses for fun or to develop new skills. Online courses are affordable, fast and convenient. Each class is taught by an expert instructor, many whom are nationally known authors.

Try the Digital Photography and Photoshop courses to rev up your creative side. Children and parents can learn to build family websites through "Creating Web Pages," where they can keep family and friends updated with pictures and news. Anyone at any age can learn computer applications like Microsoft PowerPoint or Excel.

Lessons can be completed late at night, on weekends or any time, night or day. More than 272 courses starting at \$69 are offered monthly and last for six weeks. New courses are added each month, so if you don't find your course this month, check the Online Learning website the following month.

For more information or to register, visit the Online Learning website at <http://cs.wcpss.net/wcpssonline>.



## Superintendent *(cont'd from front page)*

communication, with parents and teachers sharing the commitment to helping a child reach his or her potential, then a child's success will be amplified.

I keep these two relationships in mind when I think about the changes that Wake County has experienced in the last few years. Our county is constantly growing. Our world is becoming more complex. Our academic standards and community expectations are rising. The Wake County Public School System must meet those challenges while strengthening these relationships.

For that reason I called for a top-to-bottom curriculum management audit of WCPSS's academic program. The audit results called for our school system to take some significant actions to better support our vision that **every child will graduate on time, prepared for the future**. As the Wake County Board of Education and our staff evaluate the audit recommendations, we will be looking for ways to increase our support for teaching and learning — from the opening day of kindergarten to graduation day.

"Prepared for the future" is a key phrase in our vision. Today's students will need the knowledge and skills necessary to adapt to a world that we can barely imagine. Working together, parents and educators can help our children grow into capable, confident adults ready for whatever challenges may come. I invite you to read this newsletter, talk to your teachers and principals, visit our website ([www.wcpss.net](http://www.wcpss.net)) and learn more about how we can work together to present that future to your child.



## Winter Weather and the Decision to Close Schools

When winter weather is approaching, the decision to close schools, delay opening or send students home early is very complex.

Safety is our number one priority. Being responsible for the safety of nearly 136,000 students and 17,000 employees is an immense task. We often see vastly different weather patterns occurring simultaneously throughout the county. Some sections of the county may be icy while others are dry. Some may lose power while others do not. But it is important to keep in mind that the decision has to be made for the entire school system and not a single school or group of schools.

As soon as a final decision is made, we immediately contact the local media. You can tune in to your favorite television or radio station for information. Additionally, you can call our school system's main number at 850-1600. Schools typically update the school's main phone line with a message to reflect the closing or delay status, as well. However, the best way to get immediate information is to log onto our website at [www.wcpss.net](http://www.wcpss.net). While there, you may want to sign up for our online e-mail notification service at [www.wcpss.net/notification\\_list/](http://www.wcpss.net/notification_list/). Once you are signed up, you will receive an e-mail notification immediately after a decision has been made.

## Special Delivery

Be one of the first to know about the latest news concerning the Wake County Public School System by signing up to have information sent directly to your e-mail account.

### The School Connection

This newsletter is published biweekly and provides parents with the chance to stay current on the latest WCPSS happenings. Visit [www.wcpss.net/online\\_newsletters](http://www.wcpss.net/online_newsletters) to learn more about the newsletter and subscribe (or unsubscribe) to it.

Once you sign up for The School Connection, you will also receive the following e-mail newsletters:

- **The School Construction Report** will report on school construction and facility improvements to meet the growing Wake County student population.
- **The Classroom Connection** will report monthly about classroom instruction and the link between the WCPSS Curriculum and Instruction staff and classroom teachers.
- **The WCPSS Good News** will report on honors and recognition earned by WCPSS students, educators and administrators, as well as events of importance to the school community.



**GET CONNECTED!**  
For news and features about education in Wake County.

TUNE INTO

**The School Connection**  
TELEVISION SHOW

**Channel 11 in Raleigh**  
Mondays at 10:30 a.m.  
Thursdays at 12:30 p.m.  
Fridays at 12:30 p.m.  
Fridays at 6:00 p.m.  
Sundays at 6:30 p.m.

**Channel 11 in Cary**  
Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m.  
Fridays at 6:00 p.m.  
Sundays at 1:30 p.m.

CHANNEL 11

SC THE SCHOOL CONNECTION

FOR A COMPLETE SCHEDULE  
VISIT [WWW.WCPSS.NET/SCHOOLTV](http://WWW.WCPSS.NET/SCHOOLTV)

## ParentMatters



3600 WAKE FOREST ROAD  
PO. BOX 28041  
RALEIGH, NC 27611-8041  
PHONE: 919-850-1600

[www.wcpss.net](http://www.wcpss.net)

Wake County Public School System programs are staffed and offered without regard to race, sex, age, color, religion, national origin, citizenship status, political affiliation, or disability.