



Parent Matters

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

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/.

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.



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

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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:

- Reading a bedtime story to your preschool child,
- 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,
- 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.



Entrance Date for Kindergartners Changes

The N.C. General Assembly recently passed legislation that changed North Carolina's kindergarten admission requirements. The changes will go into effect for the **2009-10** school year.

Currently, a child must reach the age of five on or before October 16 of the upcoming school year to enter kindergarten. The new law that goes into effect in **2009-10** will move that date back to August 31.

More information about kindergarten registration can be found on our website at www.wcpss.net/isd/elementary/lang_arts/kindergarten/.



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, the program administrator, at 858-1628 for additional information.

Magnet Programs Bring Innovation to Wake Schools

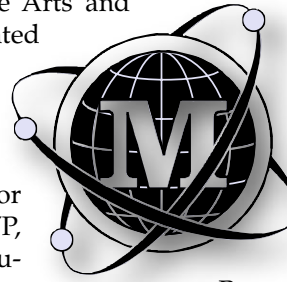
The Wake County Public School System will host its annual Magnet Schools Fair on Saturday, Nov. 3 at Southeast Raleigh Magnet High School from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. Families interested in exploring their educational options should check out the innovative programs offered through the network of magnet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

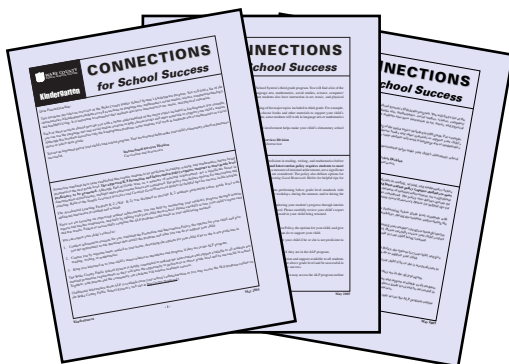
Families interested in learning more about magnet programs may come by the Magnet

Resource Center located on the campus of Millbrook Magnet Elementary School, visit the magnet website www.wcpss.net/magnet 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.

Connections Help Parents Support Their Children's Education

Brochures providing overviews of the school system's instructional programs by grade level are available on the WCPSS website at www.wcpss.net/curriculum-instruction/docs_downloads/connections/index.html.

These brochures, called *Connections for School Success*, are available for download and provide information to help you better understand the topics covered in each grade. Parents are encouraged to use this information to help choose books, other materials and activities to support their children's studies.



Parent-to-Parent Corner

Having trouble getting your children to talk about their school day? Read how one parent solved this problem with a little ingenuity and a pebble.

Pass the Pebble

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My husband and I like to know what's going on in our children's classrooms. But when we would ask them about their day, our normally chatty kids seemed to clam up.

One evening, while taking a walk, I found a smooth, pretty pebble. I took it inside and told our children it was a "talking stone." Whoever was holding it got to tell something interesting that happened that day.

As we passed the stone around, our son told us about a book his teacher was reading to the class. Our daughter shared a story about sitting with a new girl from Korea at lunch.

Soon they were telling about other things that had gone on during the day. Guess what? Having a talking stone keeps us involved in our kids' lives, and they like hearing what we have to say about our day, too!



Reading in the Elementary Schools

The Wake County Public School System is dedicated to meeting the needs of all students through rigorous literacy instruction. In order to provide a consistent conceptual framework that relies on common language



across the grade levels, the district has created a Reading Model. This model recognizes what the student brings to the classroom, the importance of the kind of classroom environment that the teacher maintains, and the essential components of reading instruction.

The WCPSS Reading Model is centered on the needs of the learners as they move through the various stages of reading

development. According to national reading research, good readers exhibit proficiency in each of the following components: foundational literacy skills, word recognition, vocabulary and concept development, fluency, and comprehension. A deficit in any one of these components can interfere with student success in reading.

Foundational literacy skills are essential for developing proficient readers. These skills include understanding the parts of a book, knowledge of letters and sounds, and the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the sounds in spoken words. Most of these skills are developed in the kindergarten year.

Word recognition is the ability to recognize words by sight or to figure out unknown words based on their parts or letter-sound patterns.

A student's vocabulary is a key component to being able to understand what is read. Most vocabulary is learned indirectly when students hear and see words in many different contexts. Some words are taught directly to help students understand new concepts and topics.

Good readers read **fluently** — reading the words accurately with both expression and a reasonable rate. When readers are able to easily recognize words and read fluently, they can focus their attention on making the connection between the ideas from the text and what they already know about the topic.

Comprehension means understanding what is read or heard. Proficient readers use strategies before, during, and after reading to understand what they read. They are aware when they don't understand part of the text and know that they have to do something differently so that they can understand. This may mean rereading, asking themselves questions, or reading ahead to see if the author explains the confusing part. Comprehension is the ultimate goal of proficient reading.



Did you know?

- In North Carolina, school librarians or media specialists are certified as teachers; in fact, school library media certification is the *only* teaching certification that requires a **master's degree or its equivalent**.
- In North Carolina, the "official" certification term used for school library media specialist is **library media coordinator**, perhaps a more appropriate description of their job description which includes: (1) in collaboration with classroom teachers, *teaching students* how to be effective users of information; (2) *managing the instructional resources* — the wide variety of books, videos, DVDs, reference materials, online resources, audiovisual equipment, and instructional technology that is used by the entire school; and (3) *making sure that students and teachers have maximum access* to those instructional materials and resources whenever they need them.
- In Wake County, one out of every six library media coordinators holds **National Board Teaching Certification**.
- Since 1990, a large body of research studies have been conducted in over 16 states (including North Carolina) which demonstrate the effectiveness of strong library media programs in boosting student achievement.

Talk with the library media coordinator and principal about the library media program at your child's school!

Reading: Suggestions for Parents

Academic success for students is often a direct result of the partnership established between school and home. Listed below are some suggestions you may find helpful to help enrich your child's reading development.

WEBSITES

Put Reading First: Helping Your Child Learn to Read

http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first2.html

Reading Rockets: Launching Young Readers

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

International Reading Association (Parent Resources)

<http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/parent.html>

Reading Is Fundamental

<http://www.rif.org/parents/activities/default.aspx>

Starfall (Early reading skills)

<http://www.starfall.com/>

IDEAS BY READING COMPONENT

Foundational Literacy Skills

Letter recognition

- Using ABC cards, have your child put the cards in order. Then have them match lower case letters to capital letters.
- Taking only a few different letters (5-8), make multiple sets of cards and play Go Fish. Children will have to ask for a particular letter to make pairs.

Phonemic Awareness

- Say a short word. Then have your child stretch bubble-gum, silly putty, or a rubber band as the two of you stretch the word by saying its sounds.
- Play word games in which you change one sound in a word to make a different word. Examples of sound changes: Change bat to mat. Now change mat to map.

Word Recognition

Phonics

- Help your child break unfamiliar long words into parts, sounding out each part and putting the parts together to say the word.
- Play *Boggle Jr.* to give your child practice with the letter-sound associations s/he is learning.

Fluency

- Use lively flashcard drills and games to help your child instantly recognize words, such as *the*, *a*, and *be*, that frequently appear in print. A list of these high-frequency words can be found at <http://literacyconnections.com>.
- Engage your child in reading short but interesting stories several times. For variation, have your child read along while you read the same passage or tape record his or her reading and then listen to the recording.

Vocabulary

- Read aloud stories, poems, and nonfiction material that your child will enjoy. Explain the meaning of the important words that are new to your child.
- Play word games such as *Pictionary*, *Scrabble*, and *Boggle*. Talk about words that may be unfamiliar to your child.

Comprehension

- Invite your child to retell a favorite story, movie, or family event. Ask questions to help your child focus on who was involved, where the action took place, and what happened. Also encourage your child to relate the story, movie, or event to other books s/he has read or experiences s/he has had.
- Talk about what you do when you're reading and something doesn't make sense to you. Maybe you reread, ask someone, or read on in hopes of getting more information. It's important for children to know that good readers sometimes have difficulties, but they persist until they understand.



Nothing Basic About Teaching Mathematics

The word *basic* implies something is simple, straightforward, or easy. However, there is nothing easy about teaching the K-5 Mathematics Standard Course of Study. What many of us traditionally knew as math was taught by facts and rules, but today, getting the answer is no longer good enough. It is about attending explicitly to connections among facts, procedures, and ideas and encouraging students to wrestle with the important ideas in an intentional and conscious way.

Nothing is simple anymore — as we are in the Information Age where information is doubling every five years and encyclopedias are being updated with Wikipedia. More information has been produced in the last 30 years than in the previous five thousand years. What does that mean for our children in mathematics education? We must produce mathematically powerful thinkers who not only can “memorize,” but analyze and comprehend how it works. And once they analyze and comprehend, they must also be able to communicate their thinking.

If you would like to examine the breadth and depth of your child’s mathematics curriculum, please visit: <http://community.learnnc.org/dpi/math> and click on *Instructional Resources*, followed by the appropriate *grade level*. For further help with terminology, click on *Glossary of Mathematical Terms for Parents and Teachers in English and Spanish*.

COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT MATHEMATICS: (NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL)

1. *Math is about learning to compute.*
Many of us in the U.S. had math instruction that focused primarily on computation, with little emphasis on understanding. If one believes that math is primarily about computation, then sense making may never take place.
2. *Mathematics is about “following rules” to guarantee correct answers.*
If mathematic procedures are un-

derstood as inventions designed to make common problems more easily solvable and to facilitate communication involving quantity, those procedures take on new meaning. Different procedures can be compared for their advantages and disadvantages.

3. *Some people have the ability to “do math” and some don’t.*

This is a serious misperception in the U.S. but not in other countries where the idea is that learning depends on the “energy expended” rather than the ability. That accounts for a significant difference in performance.

MATHEMATICS: SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS (Websites)

Kendall Hunt Publishing’s Parent Website:

<http://kendallhunt.com/index>

Interactive math website for children

<http://rainforestmaths.com>

National Council of Teachers of Math

<http://nctm.org>

Other NC resources:

<http://learnnc.org/students>

click on the appropriate grade level and then click on math

Helen Keller once said, “There is one thing worse than not being able to see, being able to see and having no vision.” We in Wake County have a vision that **all** students can become mathematically powerful thinkers and will be prepared for a future where they will have to compete in a global economy, which will be dominated by those who can think of the next new invention or technology or equation.

EXTENDING MATHEMATICAL THINKING

Here are some suggestions of how you can work with your child to extend mathematical thinking:

- Look for numbers wherever you can find them. Have your child practice reading them to you. Cut numbers out of the newspaper and put them in numerical order. Take a number and see whether your child can find the place value of each digit.
- Read counting books.
- Count objects, change by pennies, nickels and dimes.
- Play board games where children advance spaces on a board.
- Play dominoes and “war” with dominoes or cards.
- Use beans or counters when children are beginning to add and subtract.
- Get a ruler and measure everything in centimeters and inches. Use a meter stick to measure in meters and feet. Find reasons to measure and have your child do it for you.
- Play spatial visualization games with pattern block pieces or puzzles.
- Find the perimeter in every room in your house. Make a diagram of a room and measure the furniture. See how many different places your couch or bed will fit.
- Work on an allowance budget. Have your child keep track of money spent and look at what happens to the money.
- Play addition, subtraction, multiplication and division games. (There are many good ones out there.)
- Go bargain shopping and compare prices. See if you can find the best deal.
- Figure mileage every time you get in the car.
- Have your child teach you about what they learned at school in math. Those who can teach a subject are going to remember 90 percent of what they have taught.

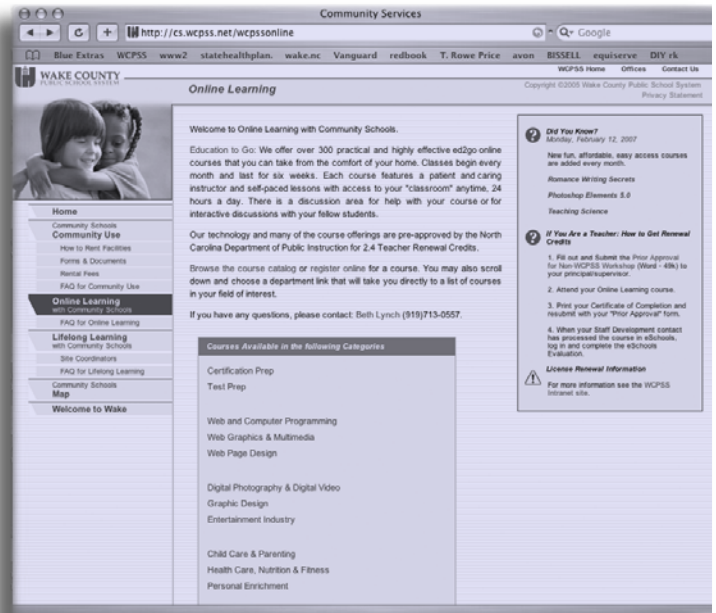
Learn Online During Track OutTime

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) 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. While there, you may want to sign up for our online e-mail notification service at 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 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

SC THE SCHOOL CONNECTION
FOR A COMPLETE SCHEDULE
VISIT WWW.WCPSS.NET/SCHOOLTV

ParentMatters



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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.