

Thoughts from Bill Fletcher – March 10, 2017

Member Wake County Board of Education

(This info prepared by Bill Fletcher and does not necessarily represent the position of the Wake County Board of Education)

State Senate Refuses to Hear HB 13

The House of Representatives unanimously passed HB13 on February 16. HB13 undoes a state budget “fix” that wreaks havoc on elementary schools. The Senate has refused to take up this urgent measure. In fact, HB13 has been sent to the senate Rules committee, aka the “legislative graveyard”.

The Issue

It is my personal understanding that a few state senators have decided to require strict adherence to a set of maximum class sizes in kindergarten through grade 3. These limits will negatively impact all of our elementary schools and students.

MAX Class Sizes	
K	18
1	16
2	17
3	17

Senate leaders assert that superintendents have been misusing state funds for years and this change is necessary. WRONG!

In reality, the number of state-funded teaching positions has been dramatically cut over time. Districts are still required to teach all state-tested subjects plus social studies, art, music & PE/Health. Yet the state does not allocate teachers for these required courses. A few questions for our Legislators:

- When did the Legislature remove art, music & PE/Health (“specials”) from the required curriculum?
- How will teachers get the required duty-free planning period each day, or their duty-free lunch? Who is teaching the children during planning time if there are no “specials”?
- How will students get the required PE/health instruction and daily recess?
- And when it comes to deciding how best to serve the children in a particular school, who is in a better position to decide: the principal or the state senate?

The Impact is Real and Significant!

In a school with 105 students per grade level (@630 total), as many as seven new K-3 class groups will be created. Current teaching positions in the school must be reassigned to these new class groups. But most teachers of art, music and PE are not certified to teach the curriculum. Therefore, teachers of art, music, PE will be replaced with other teachers who have the proper credentials. Across Wake County, more than 400 teachers of art, music and PE may be without positions. And Charters are exempt!

Any Local Options?

To maintain art, music and PE with local funds will require @\$27MM from the County Commission (@ two cent increase in Wake property taxes) or dramatic increases in class sizes in upper grades.

The Unfunded Mandate to Build More Schools.

Wake may have some vacant classrooms in a few schools somewhere in the County; that inventory is underway. The initial estimate is that 400 additional classrooms will be needed to meet the max class size standards. To provide these classrooms will require more than \$300 million for construction. No state funds are provided for construction leaving Wake taxpayers on the hook.

Factoid #30: The Education Lottery Isn't!

Amid promises of increased funding for K-12 education, the NC Education Lottery was born. Wake County receives less than \$11 million per year. The money goes to the County and is used to pay debt service on school construction costs. Hundreds of millions of lottery dollars are allocated to K-12 education BUT lottery funds replace (supplant) other funding from the state. It's a state-sponsored “Shell Game”.

Parent chats except on holidays: 1st Thursday, 1PM, Cary Chamber, 315 N Academy Street;
and 3rd Monday, 11AM, Caribou Coffee shop, 109 SW Maynard
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