

CHAPEL HILL-CARRBORO CITY SCHOOLS

Lincoln Center, Merritt Mill Road
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27516
Telephone: (919) 967-8211

Neil G. Pedersen
Superintendent

Nettie Collins-Hart, Assistant Superintendent
for Instructional Services

Raymond J. Reitz
Chief Technology Officer

Steve Scroggs, Assistant Superintendent
for Support Services

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Neil G. Pedersen
Superintendent

RE: Proposals from the County Commissioners Related to Merger

DATE: November 24, 2003

Attached are the four proposals that County Commissioners shared at their meeting on December 11, 2003. The Board asked that these be placed on the work session of the December 4, 2003 Board meeting to provide an opportunity for Board members to discuss them. The Board also requested that the attorney provide them with some direction about the authority given to County Commissioners and Boards of Education by the State Constitution and state statutes.

All of these proposals would provide additional funding to the Orange County Schools, either through a supplemental tax or the merger of the districts. The revenues from a supplemental school tax would have to be distributed equally on a per pupil basis to both school districts. It is assumed that with the levying of a supplemental countywide tax that there would be some reduction in the CHCCS district tax.

The proposals differ considerably in terms of their specificity for what collaboration might look like. Commissioner Gordon's proposal provides for a process similar to the one previously agreed to by this Board but never funded or implemented. A facilitator would work with the Boards of Education to identify potential areas for collaboration. Commissioner Gordon also recommends that a supplemental school tax be established with an initial rate of four cents that would generate \$1.5 additional dollars for the Orange County Schools,

Commissioner Brown has proposed an "Educational Excellence Task Force" to be chaired by William Friday who would be assisted by Madeline Grumet, former Dean of the UNC School of Education. The committee would use graduate students to develop recommendations for how to improve the school systems and ensure that resources are equally accessible to students and teachers. Although I have the greatest respect for Bill

Friday and Madeline Grumet, I believe that it is essential that all the members of a task force of this nature have high credentials, bringing a level of expertise that might not even exist among the staff in the two school districts. Given that several members of our staff teach in local graduate programs and many hold masters and doctoral degrees coupled with years of in-the-field experience, I do question the credibility that graduate students would bring to the development of recommendations for improvement.

In Commissioner Jacobs' proposal, I would bring to your attention his recommendations concerning a single "central" office for the two school districts, a single alternative school to serve students throughout Orange County, and a centralized pre-k center. His proposal is to charge the two school boards to develop "an analysis and plan of action to implement collaboration" in all of these areas. Commissioner Jacobs also proposes the hiring of a consultant to examine the efficiency of operations. He also supports the convening of a task force and the investigation of a countywide supplemental school tax.

Commissioner Carey proposes that the districts be merged by July 1, 2006 or 2008 and that the district tax be phased out over that period. He also proposes a three-year moratorium on forced student transfers with some specific exceptions.

It's important that the Board of Education study these proposals and provide feedback to the Commissioners as soon as possible. These proposals may be on the BOCC's agenda for December 9, 2003.