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World-class standards urged for all Wake County public schools

Global competition and a growing demand that all graduates meet higher standards require a different design for Wake County's public schools in order to provide a world-class education.

A report by Wake Education Partnership titled "Suspending Disbelief" defines those traits. It was released in 2009 following a year of study with six other education groups and more than three dozen community leaders.

Based on the research and recommendations of the community-wide group, the Partnership's report offers a framework for change in the schools. Its findings, a summary of which can be found below, describe what a world-class system would look like in areas such as basic student competencies, curriculum standards, assessment, testing and the way time is used in the classroom.

The [report](#) is intended to generate debate and discussion about what it means to guarantee every graduate is ready to compete in a global economy. The Partnership would be pleased to present an overview and discuss the work with any interested groups. Please contact Tim Simmons, VP of Communications, at the phone number or email listed above.

Key Findings:

Basic Competencies:

Students should have the ability to: Use all forms of information, especially current media and technology; develop a greater cultural awareness of their country and others; have the ability to work with others of different backgrounds; and develop skills to analyze multiple sources of information that can be used to solve real problems.

Curriculum Standards:

A world-class standards curriculum would focus on fewer topics in greater depth. Flexible pathways to a diploma would acknowledge that a four-year college degree is not necessary for every high school graduate, but a more rigorous curriculum is needed for those going directly into the workforce. A world-class curriculum also recognizes some students are going to exceed the standards no matter how high one sets the bar. Meeting the needs of those students is also critical in a global economy. Regardless of a student's plans after high school, the curriculum should stress digital literacy, global perspectives and second language instruction each and every year.

Assessment and Testing:

Continuous classroom assessment would be more important than annual high-stakes exams in multiple topics. More responsibility would fall to teachers to assess students' strengths. Teachers,

in turn, would be held accountable for sharing successful learning strategies with each other. Local tests would eventually be modified to include questions that would allow the public to gauge how average student performance compares to international standards.

Time:

Schedules within the current school day would be redesigned to increase the amount of time that teachers and students spend in direct, engaged learning. Teachers will need more time for preparation, which will likely mean a new approach to school duties for all adults. The report anticipates a longer school year or even school day, but specifically does not call for changes in that area until the time now available is put to better academic use.

For a copy of the full report, click [here](#)

About Wake Education Partnership

Wake Education Partnership is an independent non-profit dedicated to creating world-class schools in Wake County through business and community involvement. We play a critical role in helping local business leaders, elected officials and educators work together to provide an excellent education for all students, in part by educating the public about current school issues. For questions about the report, contact Tim Simmons, VP of Communications, at 919.821.7609 or tsimmons@wakeedpartnership.org

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