

Rethinking Redistricting: Neighborhood Schools, Diverse Schools, or Schools that Work?

Overview: Many words have been said about the various redistricting proposals for both elementary and middle schools. The debate seems to be an unusual combination of ideology, fear, and philosophy, not to mention politics. The motivations and intentions of many participants have been questioned and challenged in public and private settings. Much of what has been said is about fear of what may happen.

Instead of speculating about what may happen, please take a look at what is happening right now. [The table on the other side](#)—whose data source is the NC Department of Public Instruction—clearly indicates that **we have a problem**.

The data shows an inverse relationship between the percentage of poor (or non-white) children in a school and that school's total performance on the 8th Grade EOG Reading Test. **In other words, the poorer and darker the school, the lower the test scores.**

In the New Hanover County School System, the schools must take the children that enroll. Parents don't keep their best and brightest, their most-prepared children at home. They send the children that they have.

The school system is obligated by law and its own mission statement to meet those children *right where they are* and provide them with a quality education. That is, the schools must conform to the child and not the child to the schools. **The data on the reverse show that this is not presently happening; we have not met the challenges we face.**

In the present debate over redistricting, the data on the reverse suggests that the School Board **must** consider this question above all in its deliberations: **What consequences will a redistricting plan that makes schools poorer and darker have for meeting its stated goal of 85% proficiency by 2012?**

If their answer to that question is *There is no relationship between demographics and increased proficiency*, then the one question looms large: **What can be done differently to make schools that work?**

Data set online at: <http://files.meetup.com/1002969/8thReadingEOG2008-09.pdf>

Data compiled and distributed by:

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