

January 2, 2013

Wake County Board Of Education

Crossroads 1

5625 Dillard Rd.

Cary, NC 27518

Members of the Board of Education:

I respectfully submit my letter of interest in the District 1 Board of Education vacancy. I am seeking this position because I am committed to the ideals of public education and want to contribute to leading WCPSS into a truly world class system that serves all students equally and effectively, regardless of which school they attend. As a resident of eastern Wake County since 1986, I am aware of the unique challenges and opportunities facing our children. My goal is to effectively represent eastern Wake County while remembering that all members of the Board of Education serve all students and parents of Wake County.

I am a proud retiree of WCPSS. I began my teaching career as a social studies teacher at Enloe High School. I continued at Sanderson and Athens Drive High Schools. I left the system to become principal of Topsail Junior-Senior High School only to return shortly to become principal at Zebulon High School which housed sixth through twelfth graders at the time. The high school students were merged into East Wake High School in three years and Zebulon High became Zebulon Middle School which served Zebulon and Wendell. It was during the merger of the high school and the formation of the middle school that I had my first experiences in finding common ground for two separate communities in forming schools in which all felt a sense of pride and respect.

I was appointed as the first principal of Durant Road Middle School in 1994. The school opened as the second multitrack year round middle school and served roughly the northern half of Wake County. At that time, no students were assigned to year round schools so in order to succeed we had to recruit against traditional and magnet schools. Durant Road quickly grew to over 1700 students. Although large, very diverse, and serving various communities, the faculty at Durant took great pride in reaching the needs of ALL students and respecting all parents.

I retired as principal of Durant Road in 2005, but immediately became an associate of The Leadership Group of the Carolinas, a private consulting group that specializes in school support and reform. In this role, I have continued to work with schools and school leaders across the

state. I have served as the “turnaround coach” for two challenged high schools and three middle schools that were identified by the state as habitually low performing. These experiences have given me a true insight into the hurdles that low performing schools face and some possible solutions to help them overcome those hurdles.

I have also served as a leadership coach for North Carolina New Schools. I assisted in the planning and implementation of two early colleges and one New Tech high school that was a part of a whole school conversion like East Wake High. I presently serve as the leadership coach for eight New Schools’ innovative high schools. Seeing how some schools have achieved high rates of success from very diverse populations by stressing “rigor, relevance and relationships” has been exciting and energizing.

I also have been a part of the Distinguished Leadership in Practice training provided by the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals’ Association to principals across the state. In addition, I coordinate the Future Ready Leadership program offered to assistant principals sponsored by the same association.

Another project that I have been an on-going participant is the Northeast Leadership Academy sponsored by North Carolina State University. This program focuses on training talented teachers in northeastern North Carolina to become 21st Century School leaders and hopefully to remain in those communities. I currently supervise three interns and two assistant principals.

Lastly, I teach in the Gardner Webb University Masters in Middle School program. This has caused me to stay up to date with curriculum and best instructional practices. Implementing the Common Core, RTI, effective use of technology in the classroom, use of formative assessments, and collecting and using data for informed decision making are some of the areas of focus for my students whom are all Wake County middle school teachers.

As you can see, the combination of these professional experiences and my long time residency in eastern Wake County provide me with the qualities that would help me be effective in implementing the Board’s strategic plan. The last sentence of your vision, “WCPSS will continue this community’s proud tradition of education leadership and academic excellence with a proactive school staff, effectively supported by the Board of Education and Central Services” is a great summary statement of our purpose. The Board’s core beliefs and focus areas are the guiding principles of what will and should make a school district a true world class system, second to none.

The fact that “High Academic Achievement and Growth for all Students” is the first focus area is critical. Clearly it is the primary purpose for which schools exist. All other focus areas rightfully support that one goal. If we achieve high academic achievement and growth for ALL students, then the achievement gap will be eliminated. In order to do this, it is critical to recruit, select,

develop, and retain highly effective staff at all levels. Establishing a climate and culture that is positive, supportive, and effective starts at the top and should infuse all levels of the system. And, last, but equally important, is reestablishing a culture and climate of mutual support, engagement, involvement, trust, and shared responsibility among the Board, families, and community members.

What can I bring to the Board to support and meet the focus areas and the stated strategies? I bring successful experiences and lessons learned in doing that kind of work as a principal, in serving as a coach in struggling schools and helping develop highly innovative and successful schools. Here are some the lessons I have learned and how I would use them to help the Board achieve success in the focus areas:

- The entire system, from the Board, superintendent and central staff, to school level staff must focus and be held accountable for improved student achievement.
- All staff at all levels must be competent in their respective roles
- The Board, through its words and deeds must demonstrate its commitment to student success above all other matters. This includes the allocation of resources.
- We all must understand what rigor means and what content and skills must be taught to our students in order for them to prepare for the highly competitive world that we now live in.
- We must all, including the Board and central staff, be held accountable for the success of each individual student and each school. If each school can truly guarantee every parent that it will provide their child with a world class education, then the pains of reassignment will be lessened.
- As a Board, we must hire a superintendent who is highly competent and totally committed to student success. He or she must understand that schools are unique and that a “one-size fits all” model is not a strategy that leads to success at all schools. The new superintendent must be able to organize and reorganize to meet the unique challenges of a complex system like Wake as it continues to evolve. He or she also must view their work from the perspective of student and school success and hold everyone to high expectations in this regard. The Superintendent and his or her staff must view their roles as supportive of better schools and greater student success.
- As a Board, we must find the time and resources to provide effective staff development at all levels to support improved instructional strategies as measured by student success. Professional development must include follow up on the implementation of the training and measurements of its effectiveness. We must include leadership training and support so that all schools have highly trained and effective leaders. The number one reason for highly qualified teachers staying or leaving a school is the school’s leadership.

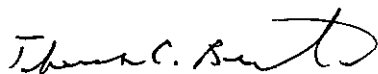
- The Board must find more effective ways to provide access, analysis, and meaning to the reams of data now available at all levels. Strategies, plans, allocation of resources, accountability, etc. must all be based on sound analysis of multidimensional data.

I believe that my training, experiences, and interpersonal skills are appropriate to the challenges we face. My record of working with schools and school systems to put in place the structures and practices as described above speaks for itself.

A second strategy is to work diligently in knowing, understanding and advocating for the unique needs of each school in eastern Wake County. District 1 is large and very diverse in its schools, communities, and resources. Providing a framework for school staffs and parents to express their views about their unique situations in a consistent, results-oriented manner is critical to our District. Visiting schools, talking with staffs, students and parents, and building relationships with stakeholders at all levels in all communities will take a commitment of time. If I am appointed, I will offer a specific and measurable plan for this vital function.

The third strategy is practicing what I did as a principal—working to build common grounds with all stakeholders. Trusting relationships must be built with other Board members, central staff and school level staff, parents, and other community members in order to allow for open and respectful discussions. As a principal I had countless occasions to stress that as long as we all had the intentions of doing what is best for students and schools, then honest disagreements are positive things to have. That is how we advance and make progress. However, we must all work from the assumption that we are working for the best interests of students and schools.

In conclusion, I feel that I am a solid choice to fill the vacant District 1 seat based on my long residency in eastern Wake County, my many years of experiences working in Wake County, and working with schools and training of educators across the state. Throughout my career, my successes have come as the result of a commitment to do whatever it takes to create successful learning experiences for students and confidence in parents that we are serving their children well. I have demonstrated the capacity to work with all stakeholders and audiences. I believe these attributes would serve me well as a member of the Board. I was honored to work for WCPSS and I would be honored to be chosen to serve in this capacity.



Thomas C. Benton

212 W. Gannon Ave.

Zebulon, NC 27597

Thomas C. Benton
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Zebulon, NC 27597
Home Phone: 919-269-7859
Cell Phone: 919-946-6869
E-mail: unctcb@aol.com

I. EDUCATION

- A. 1973—Bachelors Degree—UNC-Chapel Hill—Secondary Education-Social Studies
- B. 1980—Masters Degree—UNC-Chapel Hill—Education Administration
- C. 1989—Advanced Degree—UNC-Chapel Hill—Education Administration

II. TEACHING EXPERIENCE—High School Social Studies

- A. 1973-1975—Enloe High School, Raleigh, NC
- B. 1975-1978—Sanderson High School, Raleigh, NC
- C. 1978-1979—Athens Dr. High School, Raleigh, NC
 - 1. Department Chair
 - 2. Varsity Soccer Coach
- D. 1979-1981—Sanderson High School, Raleigh, NC
 - 1. Faculty Chair
 - 2. Varsity Tennis Coach
 - 3. JV Basketball Coach
 - 4. Curriculum writer—American Political Process, Law and Justice, Technology and Ecology

III. ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

- A. 1978-1981—Summer School Director—Sanderson High School
 - 1. Organized and directed summer program for 1000-1200 students in grades 7-12.
 - 2. Wrote summer school manual for Wake County
- B. 1981-1985—Principal, Topsail Jr.-Sr. High, Hampstead, NC
 - 1. Opened new addition and converted school from a grade 8-12 high school to a 7-9 Junior High and 10-12 High School
 - 2. Revised math curriculum for junior high
 - 3. Became first SAC accredited secondary school in Pender county, 1983
 - 4. Started varsity football program
 - 5. Completed PEP IV program, 1984
- C. 1985—1994—Principal, Zebulon High and Middle School, Zebulon, NC
 - 1. School converted from a 6-12 High School to a 6-8 middle school in 1989

2. Planned and implemented a middle school program, i.e. teaming, advisor-advisee, etc.
 3. One of first two middle schools to design and implement a CIS program
 4. One of two middle schools to receive a Glaxo sponsored grant to integrate technology and more hands-on activities into Science in partnership with the NC School of Science and Math.
- D. 1994-2005—Principal, Durant Rd. Middle School, Raleigh, NC
1. Opened new multitrack year-round middle school which grew from 200 to 1700+ students in 3 years
 2. Became one of the first Wake county middle schools to reach 95% proficiency on EOG tests
 3. One of first four “Schools to Watch” in North Carolina
 4. Named as a national “School of Distinction”, National Assoc. of Year-round Education
 5. NC School of Distinction or School of Excellence each year of ABC program
 6. Recognized as school with most NBTS certified teachers (31) in Wake County
 7. Elected as President of the Wake County Principals and Asst. Principals Assoc. for two terms
- E. 2010—Interim Principal at East Wake High School of Integrated Technology (3 months—organized and opened the school year).

IV. ADDITIONAL WORK EXPERIENCES

- A. Leadership Coach to Carter Community Charter School – Durham, NC – 2004-05
- B. Schools to Watch Selection Committee Member – 2004-2005
- C. Time Management Seminar Presenter – PEP –2005, 2006
- D. Wake County Public School System Recruiter 2005-2008
- E. Planning Facilitator for three New Schools Project schools—two Early College and one New Tech(part of a whole school conversion model)
 1. Greene Early College—2006-2009
 2. Scotland County New Tech—2006-2009
 3. Scotland County Early College—2006-2010
- F. State Turnaround Coach for two high and three middle schools
 1. Southeast Halifax High-- 2006-2009
 2. Northwest Halifax High --2006-2009
 3. Weldon Middle—2006 -2010
 4. Lowes Grove Middle (Durham)---2006-2010
 5. Neal Middle (Durham)—2010
- G. Principals’ Coach in various LEAs
- H. State trainer for implementation of the new Principals Evaluation Instrument—2008

- I. Mentor for ILT 1 and 2 teachers—Wake County—2008-2010
- J. Consultant to Triangle Leadership Academy—worked to implement School Leaders Action Networks for high school principals from different LEAs: conducted four-day workshops for Assistant Principals on how to interpret and use data for school change—2010-2011
- K. Conducted a variety of workshops for school staffs and/or administrators. Some topics but not all were: Implementing PLCs, classroom management, use of data to support instructional practices, time management, best practices for administrators, planning and implementing ninth grade academies, using the revised Bloom's taxonomy for classroom instruction, planning and implementing a mentoring program for beginning teachers, and creating and maintaining high staff morale.
- L. NCPAPA Distinguished Leadership in Practice statewide training facilitator—2011 and continuing
- M. Coordinated and assisted in planning NCPAPA's Future Ready Leadership which is a statewide training program for assistant principals.
- N. Coach eight principal interns in NC State's Northeastern Leadership Academy. 2011 and continuing
- O. Adjunct professor for Gardner-Webb University's Masters in Middle School Education program.
- P. Serve as the Leadership Coach for eight North Carolina New School Early College, STEM, and Tech High Schools. 2012 and continuing

V. RECOGNITIONS

- A. Pender County Principal of the Year, 1984
- B. Wake County Middle School Principal of the Year, 1993
- C. North Carolina Middle School Association Regional Administrator of the Year, 2002
- D. North Carolina Middle School Association Region 3 Administrator of the Year, 2005

**Eastern Wake County Mayors
Wake County, North Carolina**

December 31, 2012

Wake County Board of Education
Crossroads 1, 5625 Dillard Drive
Cary, NC 27518

Re: District 1 Vacancy

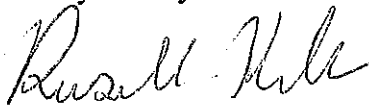
Ladies and Gentlemen:

We, the undersigned, are concerned about the representation of our district when an appointment is made to replace resigning member Chris Malone. We have met and discussed possible persons to recommend for the position, and without any reservation support the application of Thomas C. Benton.

Tom has for many years worked in the Wake County School System and, following his retirement has continued to contribute to education in North Carolina. We believe he is well qualified to represent us both by virtue of his education, his first hand educational experience, and his familiarity with Eastern Wake County. His resume and application illustrate these facts and certainly support our position.

As mayors of the municipalities of District 1, we encourage you to install Mr. Benton in the vacant position and let him represent our constituents and us. We have good rapport and open communication with him and truly believe he will be an asset to all of Wake County.

Thank you for your consideration.



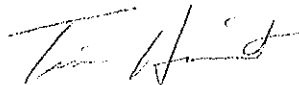
Russell Killen, Mayor
Knightdale



Frank Eagles, Mayor
Rolesville



Vivian Jones, Mayor
Wake Forest



Tim Hinnant, Mayor
Wendell



Robert S. Matheny, Mayor
Zebulon

**500 N. Wakefield St.
Zebulon, NC 27597**

December 28, 2012

Chairman Keith Sutton

Wake County Board of Education

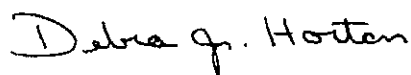
Crossroads I, 5625 Dillard Drive

Cary, NC 27518

Chairman Sutton,

I have had the pleasure to know and work with Mr. Tom Benton since my children attended Durant Road Middle School under his leadership as Principal. We worked in partnership as both a PTA leader and parent advocate for my students. Tom was a skilled leader recognizing the importance of strong parental involvement as a key factor in student success. Mr. Benton was well respected as a voice on our PTA Board and always directed our work toward the mission of supporting all the students. He was instrumental in our technology program to enable educators and students to be well prepared for the important media skills that middle school students will need to compete in a global society. Mr. Benton supported the efforts of the PTA to increase parent knowledge of curriculum, school safety, and education trends with workshops, speakers, and take home communications. His high expectation for all school stakeholders was a driving force behind the success of our students. Tom wanted parents as partners and listened with respect to our concerns. He was able to mediate parent and school conflict many times with a dose of education, caring and firmness when needed. Mr. Benton is an advocate for the importance of parent and community involvement in our schools.

I submit this recommendation for your consideration of Mr. Tom Benton to fill the vacant seat of the District 1 representative on the Wake County Board of Education. I am a resident of District 1 and look forward to him representing the voices of all school stakeholders on the Wake County School Board.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debra J. Horton".

Debra J. Horton

January 3, 2003

To the Wake County Public School Board Members:

It is with pleasure that I highly recommend Mr. Thomas Benton to fill the vacancy on the Wake County School Board for District 1. I have together over 40 years of teaching and administrative experience in the WCPSS. Not only am I a native of this district but the majority of my service has been in Wendell and Zebulon even though I did serve the communities of Cary and Fuquay-Varina for short periods of time. Knowing Wake County Schools well, I feel that Mr. Tom Benton would be an excellent school board member.

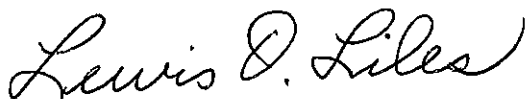
The School Board is the important policy making body of our great school system. Each member should promote policies for the good of the students and employees of the greater school district. Mr. Benton has a global understanding of the Wake County School System and has demonstrated that all of his actions are for the good of students and the employees in his charge.

He has been a high school and middle school administrator in and in close proximity to District 1. His work at Zebulon High School was with a true small community high school and his work at Durant Middle illustrated his expertise in implementing an innovative program. Also Mr. Benton has a global perspective in that he has done recruiting for the school system and he has worked with instructional improvement projects throughout the state of North Carolina. In many capacities he has illustrated his understanding and promotion of the values of the Wake County School Board.

As a fellow administrator in District 1, I saw firsthand that Mr. Benton was interested in the promotion of student achievement and employee well being. Monthly Advisory Board meetings gave me a consistent look at how Mr. Benton arrives at sound educational decisions. Likewise, he has had two of his own children to attend Wake County Schools and is fully aware of how parents view a successful school system.

The work of a School Board member is tedious and very demanding. To have a person such as Mr. Tom Benton that is willing to make a full commitment to this task and to promote sound educational policies for the good of all our students, parents, and educators is a blessing that can't be ignored. I look forward to the positive appointment of Mr. Tom Benton as the replacement school board member of District 1. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration in this matter.

Yours truly,



Lewis O. Liles
Retired Zebulon Elementary School Principal,
East Wake High School Intervention Coordinator

Linda B. Johnson
406 W. Sycamore Street
Zebulon, North Carolina 27597

Mr. Keith Sutton, Chair
Wake County Board of Education
% District I Vacancy
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Cary, North Carolina 27518

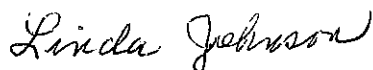
Dear Keith and Board of Education Members

It is with the greatest pride that I write this letter in support of Tom Benton, who has graciously agreed to be considered for the District I vacancy on your Board. Having served on the BOE for twelve years representing District I, I worked closely with Tom when he was a principal in our area. I feel I know him well and if ever we needed an informed and involved leader to represent our area, it is now!

Your Board has been through so many changes and has had to make difficult decisions. While I worked hard on the Board, you have faced really tough challenges unlike ones that I had to face. Tom is thoughtful, a good listener and an individual who really thinks and does his research before he offers an opinion.

Many citizens in this area have met and talked about the importance of having the right person to represent us. Tom has the qualifications and the passion for the work ahead. I have remained active in the field of education and now direct the East Wake Education Foundation. Our mission is to give as many children as possible every opportunity to arrive at school age healthy and ready to learn. Through this work, I still hear from parents who are so concerned with what their children's choices will be. Tom understands East Wake County's population and the challenge of having a large number of low income families. If you select Tom, you will not be disappointed and you will be adding a strong school advocate to your Board.

Warmest Regards,



Linda B. Johnson