



Concerned parents discuss what changes they would like to see included in the reformation models at priority schools next school year during a town hall meeting held at Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy last week.



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Models announced for remaining priority schools

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem Forsyth County Board of Education has announced the education models that will be implemented at the remaining ten priority schools in the area.

Last month *The Chronicle* reported that the school board decided to implement the federal government's restart model at Cook Elementary, which means it will operate with a new principal, new staff and new instructional model. Until now, not much has been said about what changes would be made at the remaining priority schools.

Along with substantial changes to education models, priority or low-performing schools also receive additional grant money to help turnaround efforts.

During a town hall meeting with parents and teachers last Thursday, school board officials announced that Ashley Academy, Petree Elementary and Philo-Hill Magnet School will operate under the federal government's "transformation model." The designation means the schools will have new principals during the 2016-17 school year, but will keep the majority of the current staff.

While Essie McCoy, current principal at Petree, will take over at Philo-Hill Magnet School, the new principals at the other schools have not yet been announced.

There are likely to be program changes at the transformation schools as well. Superintendent Beverly Emory said the upcoming school year will

be a planning year for the transformation schools to turn things around by the start of the 2017 school year.

"We want to give the administrators at these schools time to decide how they want their schools to be different. We decided that the transformation model was the best fit for the students at these schools."

The other seven schools in the district that require reform will keep their current principals and staff, but seven turnaround principles will be applied at the schools. Those schools are Easton, Forest Park and Kimberley Park Elementary Schools, Mineral Springs Middle School, and Carver, Kennedy and Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy at the high school level.

According to Chief Academic Officer Kenneth Simington, some principles that will be implemented at the schools include a review of the principal's performance, review of teachers' effectiveness, redesigning the school day, week or year, strengthening the instructional program, and providing ongoing family and community engagement.

"When implementing these principles, we are focusing on student performance and ways to create growth," said Simington. "We also will be looking to get input from the teachers and parents to help decide what these schools will look like next school year."

Many teachers in attendance raised questions about transitioning through the different models they have been assigned. Carver

High School math teacher Jonathan Stowe said faculty members deserve to know what the end goal is. Stowe mentioned teachers and other staff need to know that in the future a new model will not be implemented at the schools.

"How does Carver go from seven turnaround principles to not being a priority school anymore?" asked Stowe. "These are the types of questions we need answered. If we don't know what our end goal is, we can't tell the parents."

Simington said while the goals for each individual school are different, the board does not plan to implement a different reformation model at any of the schools that have already been assigned a plan.

Following a brief question and answer session, parents and teachers got into small groups to decide what changes they would like to see implemented at the priority schools. Both parents and teachers agreed that incorporating community organizations into the education process would help a great deal, especially in the schools that have a high poverty rate.

Dakeisha Williams, a parent at Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy, said because of the type of families at the priority schools, the board needs to find different ways to communicate with the parents.

"We have to find more ways to reach the parents of these children," said Williams. "The board should be reaching out to community organizations, non-profits and even churches to help turn these schools around. This has to be a group effort."



Photo by Tevin Stinson
Hundreds gathered at Green Street United Methodist Church on Monday, April 11, to protest House Bill 2, which went into effect earlier this month.

HB 2

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in federal court, but must first go through an approval process that could last more than six months.

During the protest, Wake Forest University law professor Sidney Shapiro discussed the legal impacts of the law. Shapiro said HB2 may run afoul with federal law.

According to Shapiro, one of the country's leading experts in administrative procedure and regulatory policy, there are a number of statutes that protect people from discrimination on the basis of sexual identity. He also mentioned that a lawsuit has been filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) claiming failure

by the state to protect residents.

"These changes make North Carolina the most repressive state in the

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union," he said. "While there are a number of lawsuits already filed against HB 2, citizen action is the best and quickest way to changing state policy."

Criminal defense attorney David Freedman noted that the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a similar law in 1996.

In the case *Romer v. Evans*, the court ruled that Amendment 2 of the Colorado State Constitution violated the equal protection clause. Records state Amendment 2 singled out

homosexual and bisexual persons, imposing a broad disability by denying the right to seek and receive specific legal protection from discrimination.

Freedman said the ruling in *Romer v. Evans* can be used to persuade a federal court to overturn the law.

"HB 2 is a mistake, but I am confident that the Constitution will set us free," Freedman said.

Tuesday afternoon, Gov. Pat McCrory asked the General Assembly to reinstate people's right to sue in state court for discrimination. He also signed an executive order that expands employment policy for state employees to cover sexual orientation and gender identity.

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