

Possible Expansion of Same Gender Education in Wake County

Emily Gamiel, Editor



WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

image via wikipedia

On September 6, 2011, Tony Tata, Wake County Schools superintendent, proposed the latest idea for North Carolina's largest school system. As the only remaining women's college in the triangle area, the idea hit close to home for Meredith College students, faculty, and alumni. Tata, who was elected superintendent of Wake County schools in December 2010, has proposed two same gender schools in the Raleigh area; one for girls and one for boys. The schools, which are referred to as "leadership academies" in an article that T. Keung Hui published on September 6, 2011 in the Raleigh News and Observer, will teach grades six through twelve and would open for the 2012-2013 school year and will be located in the heart of the Triangle area; one possible location downtown and the other in East Raleigh.

Meredith College President Dr. Jo Allen said "I think it's a wonderful plan. I think it has a lot of progressive elements that really

address the things that we know about education; what works and what doesn't work." Michelle Cox, class of 2013 Teaching Fellow, agreed with Dr. Allen by saying she thought the idea was, "really innovative." As affiliates with Meredith College, both Dr. Allen and Cox related to the success that is associated with same-gender schools. Dr. Allen said, "We know that single-sex education works. We know that it's a very important and critical piece of the toolbox for students, especially in any way you should shape or discuss developmental progress in learning."

One constant that can be found in every learning student, whether in sixth grade or some time during his or her college career, is a specific learning style that is unique to that person. One reason that same sex education works so well, in most cases, is because students who chose this style of education recognize the academic accomplishments that it brings to him or her individually. Dr. Allen said, "We know that you

don't choose your learning style. You work within its boundaries and there are strategies that you learn to compensate and do things differently." As for Meredith students, each woman has chosen this style of education on her own, as an adult. Cox, a woman who made this choice more than three years ago, prior to attending Meredith, agreed with this idea. "When I give tours for White Iris to girls who are looking at Meredith, I tell them 'I can tell you all day long why I love Meredith and why I love being in a women's institution, but you have to find out if that's right for you.'" Although Meredith students have made the decision on their own to attend the college, the students interested in attending the new school have no say in whether they will attend or not.

"We know that single-sex education works. We know that it's a very important and critical piece of the toolbox for students..."

As opposed to independent citizens, or those who are eighteen years and older who can legally make decisions for themselves, the students that would be enrolled at the proposed schools would have this decision made for them by their parents or legal guardian. On this subject, Dr. Allen thought "I think the message in here for parents is that if there are options that speak

to the way your child learns and strengthens that opportunity for learning, I don't know any parent that wouldn't sign up. Parents want to the best thing for their children." Parents may also be attracted to the fact that the schools will also be partnered with area colleges to provide "early college programs," as referred to by Hui, which means students will be able to graduate high school with two years of college credit. While some may view this as a good thing, others bring up concerns. Cox acknowledged that, "I think that sometimes we can rush things." However, this seems to be one of the only controversial aspects about Tata's proposal found on the Meredith campus.

Regardless of age, it is proven that specific learning styles call for same-gender education. With Tata's proposal, not only college students would have the option for this style of learning in Wake County, but also middle and high school age students. Dr. Allen argued strongly for this school, noting that, "You come back to the research, specifically about women's colleges, and we have plenty of evidence that they are stronger critical thinkers, stronger leaders, better communicators, more likely to go onto graduate school, and they are more likely to be satisfied in their careers. So, if you see that as an outcome that you want, you back that into the college experience and now, with this initiative, you could back that into a 6-12 experience. I think it has great potential." On October 4, 2011, the plan will be formally pitched the Wake County school board. School board elections will follow on the 11th.

IN THIS ISSUE...

State & Local: What's Up In Raleigh, NC Budget, GOP Presidential Debate, Hopscotch Music Festival

Arts & Entertainment: "Dancing With the Stars", Ask Gigi, The Tempest Review, Chocolate Chip Pumpkin Bread

Campus Life: Campus Election Results, Campus Calendar, Confessions of a Meredith Austenite, Fall Sports Preview

Opinion: Whines and Gripes, Lou Rosser In Memoriam