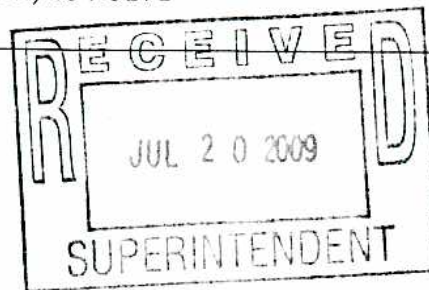


*Venita Peyton*

609 Chatham Lane, Raleigh, North Carolina 27610-1734 (919) 834-3272

July 20, 2009

Members, Wake County School Board  
3600 Wake Forest Road  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27609



Dear Member:

I am submitting this application for your consideration for the District 4 seat on the Wake County Board of Education. My reasons are outlined below.

I have spent several years watching, listening and engaging the people in District 4. These efforts include volunteer engagements at Carroll Middle and Centennial Middle Schools, assisting in the selection of North Carolina Teaching Fellows and participation in other community organizations.

My involvement in public school activities dates back to 1985 and includes the successful submission of a charter school application on August 31, 2000.

**The Middle School Academy of Southeast Raleigh**, filed on behalf of Raleigh Technology and Development, Inc. (RTD) was approved by the NC Department of Public Instruction in cooperation with the Wake County School Board. Co-chairs of RTD were Dr. Dianne Suber of St. Augustine's College and the Mayor of Raleigh, Mr. Paul Coble. Our board included Dr. Joyce Hilliard-Clark, Director of the Imhotep Academy through The Science House at North Carolina State University and Mr. Bob Luddy, developer of The Franklin Academy in Wake Forest. Unfortunately, I was hospitalized shortly thereafter with meningitis and unable to proceed with the project.

My service as a judge in the NC Teaching Fellows programs in Wake and Robeson Counties was by invitation from Program Director, Ms. Gladys Graves, an employee of the Public School Forum.

During the past year, I've attended the 2008 Back to School Rally at Southeast Raleigh High School; reassignment meetings at Southeast Raleigh and East Wake High Schools; school board meetings, parent meetings with the Concerned Citizens for African American Children, Wake Schools Community Alliance, and other programs affecting our youth.

Empowering parents to co-partner in their child's education will increase student achievement. This district's three greatest challenges are:

1. An unacceptably high student dropout rate.
2. Low attendance in parent-teacher participation, especially in conferences and PTA meetings.
3. The challenge of recognizing student achievement beyond standardized tests.

**Strategy One: Defining and Emphasizing the Goal**

The stated Wake County Public School System goal is:

*“The goal for graduation is 100% of students on-time and will be achieved by 2014. It is proposed that the percent not meeting this goal will be reduced by 50% by 2010 (90% graduating), with the additional percent not meeting reduced by 50% again by 2012 (95% graduating).”*

All of us acknowledge the value of early, active parent participation and intervention. This suggests (to me) that we must work **from the inside out** (starting with the parent and child).

Some parents appear confident with the school system when their child begins kindergarten. It is then that teachers may first recognize that some children are more advanced than others. Much of this can be attributed to income. Where cost is a factor, some young children before age 5 are in daycare environments that teach very little, while more costly ones are equipped with learning material.

I envision engaging children in technology earlier than the established goal. Sunday, July 19, 2009 was the finale of a 3 week science and technology camp developed by Ms. Jackie Johnson, creator of Mop Top, the Hip Hop Scientist ([www.moptopshop.com](http://www.moptopshop.com)). Students aged 10-14 learned Adobe Photo Shop, HTML & Dreamweaver; and Adobe Flash & Animation. This outcome established a different benchmark in their individual learning process. It certainly engaged them in study that transcends others of the same age who play video games nonstop.

To lower the number of dropouts means starting with our weakest links, such as students identified below:

## High School Dropout Rates by Ethnicity

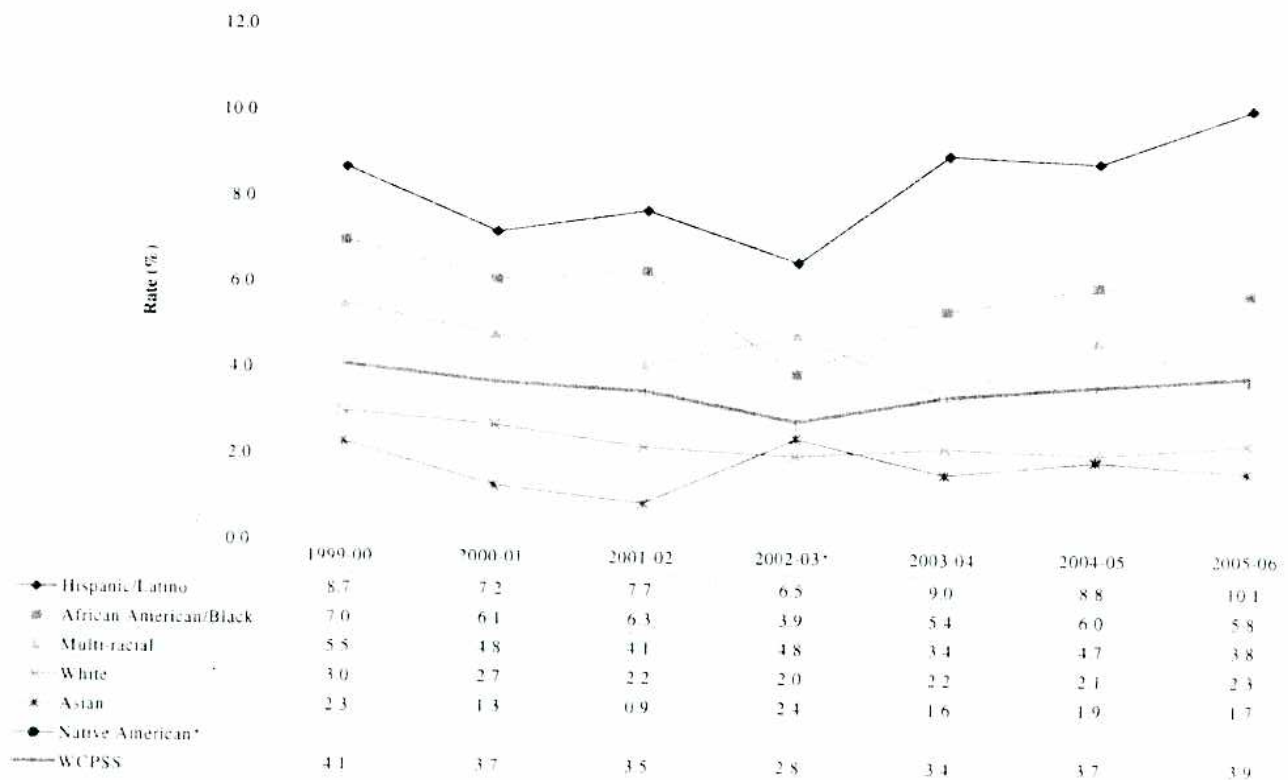


Chart provided by WCPSS

It is this foresight that I expect to bring to the Board of Education. We have struggled for years with an increasing dropout rate that barely seems to change. I believe there are three areas that require attention:

- A change in the culture of high expectations both in the classroom and in the home.
- Communicating the value of education to young children beyond the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- Helping children and their parents recognize the value of what education will mean in later years.

With fewer financial and human resources available, it means utilizing what we have. One school board member is also a board member of Communities in Schools, as is the Executive Director of the Raleigh Housing Authority. The City of Raleigh and the Housing Authority could be asked to provide transportation for parents to attend PTA meetings as a group.

A one day dropout prevention program scheduled for October is being sponsored by America's Promise (through former US Secretary of State Colin Powell and his wife, Alma) and NC Communities in Schools. While a one day workshop may offer many hours of hand wringing, it still may provide a useful agenda that can be copied for Wake County schools.

Achieving a 100% graduation rate by Year 2014 is attainable, but only if we start intervening heavily in K-5 education now. If not, then because of the high unemployment and instability in the home, I see Year 2017 as a greater possibility.

## **Strategy Two: Increasing Parent Participation through Improved Communication**

### **A. Parent Participation**

Several organizations and groups have programs for youth. Unfortunately, some seem to operate in isolation and may not have increasing academic achievement as their major goal. They manage to keep youth busy with physical activities instead.

Increasing parent participation (especially of low performing students) can be achieved by first inviting these parents to freely share **their thoughts and opinions matter** in a safe environment. Their lack of/or limited participation could be because:

1. They are uninformed.
2. They are busy working and/or being unable to participate because of family obligations or lack transportation.
3. They harbor anger, apathy, helplessness or a disbelief that their participation matters.

The District 4 representative must engage these parents in conversation and determine how many actively participate in parent-teacher conferences or other school-related, such as PTA, meetings. Limited participation can also be answered by the parent or guardian.

We must also determine how student dropouts are impacted by other parental concerns, such as unemployment. Such factors will also help school staff determine if reaching the 2014 goal of 100% graduation is achievable.

In addition, District 4 may have to consider:

1. Re-establishing a charter school or center of learning for incarcerated and/or expelled students.
2. Recommending that all suspensions be carried out **in-school** rather than externally.
3. Make best use of House Bill 804, the newly edited law governing the Personal Education Plan.
4. Identify incentives for trained educators who may be able to assist by earning college credit or credit towards their Teaching Fellow's obligation by assisting low performing children after school and/or on weekends.

In August 2008, I attended the **Back to School Rally** at Southeast Raleigh High School, noting that fewer than 60 persons (excluding a youth church choir) were in attendance. Fewer than five seemed to be Caucasian or of another race other than African American. The number of speakers (which included the School Superintendent Del Burns, Wake County Health and Human Services staff, the Sheriff's Office, Gang Prevention and others) exceeded 12.

I learned of the rally on News Channel TV 14 that Sunday morning, but wonder why attendance was so low. Was it location, timing or the means used to inform the public?

The following morning, hundreds of Wake County students arrived by 5 am at the NC State fairgrounds to listen to radio disc jockeys from radio station 107.9 FM.

When addressed nearly 200 families at the Indian Affairs Political Forum in Morrisville last fall, I acknowledged that their culture has a tremendous love for education. It's evidenced by how well their children are learning in Wake County Public Schools. I expressed hope that they would attend discussion forums so that the parents of children who are not learning as well can unlock some of their secrets.

Parents in lower income communities must be included in brainstorming how the goals of the school system, and their families, can be met. Educators and parents working together is vital.

## **B. Improved Communication**

In the early 1980s Wake County; the City of Raleigh and Time Warner Cable agreed that two channels for educational programming would be set aside at no cost. Dr. Rosalie Gates, with Meredith College, worked diligently with local college chancellors and presidents through the Cooperating Raleigh Colleges, where they agreed to share resources.

Wake County teachers (especially media coordinators) easily understood the many possibilities available through this media. We prepared training manuals and taught how the equipment could be utilized. All because of the added value of electronic communication.

**We can utilize the educational access channel and the internet to engage district-wide discussion on public school education.** One of the two educational access channels available (especially in the late evenings) could be used to run educational material that will teach both parents and children. Especially in math and science: subjects that many parents feel unqualified to help their children with.

Let's find (and when necessary create) internet friendly information that will also help teach our parents and children.

## **Strategy Three: Standardized Tests: Increasing Outcomes or Identifying Replacements**

Many students do not perform well on standardized tests such as end of grade (EOG), SAT or AP exams. Some parents don't know how to help their child in school because they can only understand the meaning of a letter grade on their child's report card.

Eventually the State of North Carolina and Wake County must identify a modified way of measuring student success other than standardized tests.

Fortunately House Bill 804 includes language which increases the use of Personal Education Plans. These plans have countrywide support. Currently Wake Schools uses an abbreviated measure. However it promises to be a very useful tool in identifying what a student's needs are.

## AP Exam Performance by Ethnicity

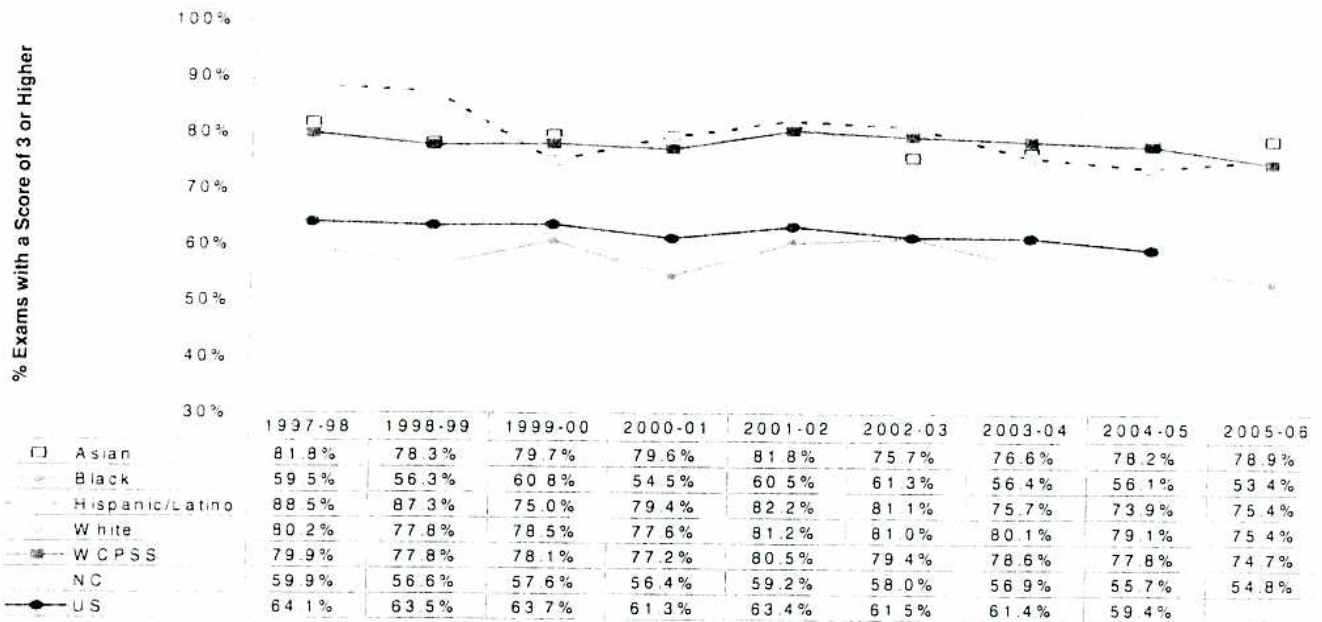


Chart provided by WCPSS.

One civil rights organization claims disparity with the number of minority students taking AP placement tests. Community leaders and elected officials to identify other ways to measure student performance.

### Summary

As the District 4 representative, I see my role as encouraging citizen participation and working with other school board members as the best solution in achieving success in the education of children. In doubtful economic times like these, these are the resources that we have readily available.

I see my role also as inviting assistance from local technology companies to assist in voluntarily engaging youth and their parents in technology. Some solutions include: the provision of free computers, service and/the provision of internet capability in low income housing areas.

Goal 2014: 100% graduation is doable. However it will need all of us serving as board members to agree that preparing youth means strengthening communication, engaging all of the faith community, identifying ways to equalize children's learning ability by first grade, improving after-school care, and encouraging all towns and municipalities in Wake County to collaborate and share resources.

# RESUME

**Venita Peyton, MPA, GRI**

B.S. Public Administration, Shaw University, Raleigh North Carolina

M.P.A. Public Administration, North Carolina State University, Raleigh North Carolina

## WORK HISTORY

**Present – Broker in Charge – Daymark Realty, Coastal Federal Credit Union, Wakefield** (transitioning)

**2002-2009 - Principal Broker/Owner, Greater Raleigh Real Estate, Inc.**

4501 New Bern Ave. Ste. 130-272, Raleigh, NC 27610-1550

Review and negotiate contract agreements, including contract terms and conditions, credit analysis, home and termite inspections, homeowners insurance, foreclosure property requirements, short sales, title searches and other legal closing requirements. Perform all aspects of accounting, budgeting and reporting related to financial assistance.

**2000-2002 – Real Estate Agent/Broker, Coldwell Banker, Century 21**

**1986-Present – Insurance Broker**

Provide individual and group Medicare, life, health, accident and insurance products and annuities through UnitedHealth Care, Prudential, Mutual of Omaha, and United American Insurance.

**5/1996 - 5/1999 Program Coordinator University of North Carolina-General Administration**

PO Box 9688, Chapel Hill, NC 27515

Administered a federal biomedical sciences research grant designed to identify and assist minority community college students for a career in the biomedical sciences industry. Developed workshops with college chancellors, presidents and deans, as appropriate.

**8/1995 – 6/1996 – Executive Director South Lee Street Neighborhood Improvement, Inc.**

PO Box 219, Ayden NC 28513 252-746-7030

Developed and administered program requirements to create a community development corporation.

**01/02/1993-07/25/1995 - Management Intern Town of Holly Springs**

PO Box 8, Holly Springs, NC 27540 919-552-6221

Developed first community profile in cooperation with CP&L (now Progress Energy) and developed four community organizations which led to a local Chamber of Commerce, new school, community park and grocery store.

**10/08/1990-11-23-92, 05-27-94- 01/27/1995 – Contractor, NC State Personnel**

620 West St. Raleigh, NC 27601

Provided administrative support to Department of Insurance, Social Services, Transportation, State Bureau of Investigation, Onsite Wastewater Division and State Banking Commission.

**Licenses: Real estate broker. Life/Health/Medicare insurance. Notary.**



# *Iglesia* **Santuario**

July 17, 2009

Wake County School Board  
3600 Wake Forest Road  
Raleigh, NC 27609

Dear School Board Member:

We recommend Venita Peyton to serve the remaining term of the District 4 seat on the Wake County School Board for many reasons.

1. Her willingness to work with many different factors, especially our community, which began over 10 years ago through the East Raleigh Citizens Advisory Council.
2. Her continuing efforts to aid this community by running for public office.
3. Wake County's need of new and innovative leadership that will redirect the Board's primary focus back to student achievement and learning.
4. Her commitment to leading the positive change we need in our school system.

Venita's strong, well documented track record of community service, business acumen and as a strong believer in raising expectations for Wake County Public School's academic performance will serve our community well.

Sincerely,

Pastor Elbis J. Hernández

**NC STATE UNIVERSITY**

Campus Box 8211  
Raleigh, NC 27695-8211  
919.515.6118 (office)  
919.515.7545 (fax)

July 17, 2009

To whom it may concern:

I am pleased to offer a recommendation for Ms. Venita Peyton to serve on the Wake County School Board.

I met her in the late 1980s. Shortly thereafter I hired her on a contractual basis to assist in preparing a grant application for the National Science Foundation. I found her to be sufficiently poised to conduct meetings with public school personnel for their participation in activities related to our then organization, the NC Science and Math Alliance.

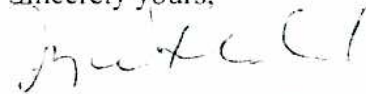
In subsequent years she returned to college to complete her bachelor's degree and shortly thereafter, her master's degree at NC State University. She began her own real estate company after battling her way back from an extraordinary illness: Cryptococcus meningitis. During her disability period, she supplemented her income by delivering newspapers between 2 and 5 am for the NY Times.

It is my pleasure to highly recommend Venita whom I have found to be a champion in supporting her clients and friends by sharing her expertise and wisdom. Venita has impressed me with her knowledge, initiative, and willingness to go to any length required to get her work done. She is a meticulous writer, planner and has created practical web sites that are useful to the public.

Her knowledge and experiences makes her easy to work with, and she will "hit the ground" running immediately as a new hire. Her work with professional associations reflects the very best in the field in addressing the needs of ethnically diverse clients. Venita is a team player and performs her responsibilities in such an outstanding manner that she has received numerous professional honors and awards that acknowledge her commitment to community outreach. You can always count on her support in working to help others.

I am confident she will be an outstanding board member and recommend her highly. She will exceed your high standards. Venita is a leader, self-starter, dependable, and responsible individual. In whatever she tries, she will rise to the top and my best wishes and recommendations go with her. I find her to be honest, trustworthy and she has earned my friendship and respect.

Sincerely yours,



Joyce Hilliard-Clark, Ph.D.  
Imhotep Academy Coordinator



# Town of Garner

Post Office Box 446 • Garner, North Carolina 27529

Phone 919-772-4688 • FAX 919-662-3874

July 14, 2009

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to recommend Venita Peyton as the District 4 representative on the Wake County Board of Education.

I have known Venita for 10 years and have found her to be open minded and confident in her abilities. She appears to be knowledgeable of the responsibilities and duties associated with serving on the School Board.

I am also satisfied that she has the flexibility in her employment and current obligations to allow the commitment of time and energy to fulfill the demands of the job.

We all know that service requires sacrifice and Venita is ready to make that sacrifice.

Warmest Regards,

Ronnie Williams

Mayor