

Mecklenburg ACTS opposes the creation of segregated "Central Zones"

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As part of his current budget proposal, CMS superintendant Peter Gorman is proposing to place all of CMS's high poverty (Title I) schools into two "learning community" zones composed exclusively of Title I schools.

One zone, called the Central Elementary Zone, would serve Title I elementary and pre-K schools. The other, called the Central Secondary Zone, would serve Title I middle and high schools. Non-Title I schools would be placed into three geographic zones: East, Northeast and Southwest. These zones would replace the current "learning communities."

As well as being more than 75 percent low-income, these zones would be approximately 94 percent minority.

Contrary to some public reports, the creation of the Title I zones would bring NO new resources to Title I schools.

CMS argues that placing Title I schools together would allow their challenges to be addressed more efficiently. Mecklenburg ACTS opposes the move. We believe these zones offer a classic example of why separate will never be equal.

- Separating Title I schools from non-Title I schools labels such schools as "different" from wealthier schools. This label would make it more difficult for neighborhoods assigned to these schools to encourage new families to settle there. It would also make it more difficult for those schools to attract quality teachers.

- Segregating schools with high proportions of challenged students from wealthier schools is likely to lower expectations at those schools, especially for those students who are already achieving.

- Because the Title I Central Zones are not geographic, many families with children assigned to one or more Title I schools would have to deal with a different administrative zone at every grade level. Many families with children in elementary, middle and high school would find themselves dealing with three separate administrative zones, one for each school. In contrast, most families at non-Title I schools would be able to deal with the same administrative zone from kindergarten through high school.

Mecklenburg ACTS recommends that CMS eliminate the Title I zones and instead create four geographic zones with balanced proportions of Title I and non-Title I schools. We urge citizens to contact CMS and school board members to support this recommendation.

Mecklenburg ACTS (Mecklenburg Area Coming Together for Schools) is an organization of parents and community members dedicated to promoting excellent educational opportunities for all of Mecklenburg County's students. For more information, please visit our Web site at: www.mecklenburgacts.org.

The shaded area shows the attendance areas for Title I Elementary Schools (Elementary Central Zone)

