



Planning Ahead: WCPSS 50th Anniversary Commemoration

Lisa Luten, Chief Communications Officer
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ANNIVERSARY**
Wake County Public School System

Campaign Goals

In 2026, the Wake County Public School System marks 50 years since the landmark 1976 merger of the Raleigh City and Wake County schools. This campaign celebrates the foresight and courage of those who unified our schools, creating a single system dedicated to excellence. It will honor a half-century legacy and will aim to inspire our community to build on that legacy for future generations.

- Celebrate the WCPSS's legacy while engaging the community in looking forward.
- Involve students, staff, alumni, community partners, and the wider public.
- Maintain momentum and visibility throughout the celebration year
- Be intentional about uplifting stories reflect the full diversity of experiences in our community



Key Dates

- 1973** Residents from both **Raleigh City Schools** and **Wake County Schools** participated in a community referendum. The merger was defeated by a two-to-one margin.
- Early 1975** Nearly \$1 million in federal funds are cut from the Raleigh City Schools by the Office of Civil Rights because they had not achieved adequate integration
- June 1975** The General Assembly of North Carolina approves legislation enabling the creation of the merged system.
- Late 1975** The Boards of Education of the Raleigh City and Wake County school districts vote to merge.
- July 1, 1976** Wake County and Raleigh City school boards merge and begin search for superintendent.
Vernon Malone, chair; Billy R. Johnson, vice chair
James E. Atkins; Sue N. Byrne; F. Roland Danielson; Melvin L. Finch, Jr.; Mary M. Gentry; W. Casper Holroyd, Jr.; J.C. Knowles; Charlotte M. Martin; John T. Massey, Jr.; H. Gilliam Nicholson; Samuel S. Ranzino; A. Roy Tilley; Cliffornia G. Wimberly
- August 1976** Approximately 20,000 Raleigh City students and 33,000 Wake County students join to form the **Wake County Public School System** to create a district of approximately 53,000 students under the leadership of **Dr. John A. Murphy**.
- 1977** First Magnet Schools open - a GT program at Hunter and a before-and-after school day program at Phillips.



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Campaign Messages

Honoring Visionary Leadership

Fifty years ago, our community's leaders had the courage to unite and integrate our schools – setting us on a bold new path

Celebrating a Legacy of Excellence and Opportunity

From integration to innovation, we've built 50 years of excellence by expanding opportunity for students.

Inspiring the Future—Upholding the Legacy

Our past inspires our future: together we will carry this legacy forward for the next 50 years.





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First Schools



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Celebration | *Fifty Golden Celebrations*

Fifty Golden Celebrations is an initiative to recognize and uplift existing events across our schools and communities that incorporate the WCPSS 50th Anniversary theme.

How it works:

- The district and individual schools will be invited to embed the 50th theme into established events such as:
 - Open houses, festivals, award ceremonies
 - Celebrations of the arts
 - Employee celebration events
- A celebration toolkit will be provided with:
 - Logos, hashtags, banners, messaging samples, and signage
 - Ideas for student, alumni and community involvement
 - Templates for photos, event recaps, and social sharing



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Volunteerism | *50 Acts of Kindness for 50 Years*

Fifty Acts of Kindness is an initiative encouraging schools, students, families, staff, and partners to engage in intentional acts of service and volunteerism throughout the 50th anniversary year. This campaign invites the WCPSS community to honor the legacy of the merger by giving back—reflecting the district’s values of equity, empathy, and shared responsibility.

How It Works:

Schools, classes, clubs, and departments are encouraged to:

- Organize service projects (e.g., food drives, cleanups)
- Perform acts of kindness (e.g., gratitude campaigns, kindness walls, peer mentoring)
- Partner with PTAs, community groups, or faith-based organizations for larger volunteer efforts

Examples of Participation

- School-based: campus beautification, book donations, buddy programs
- Classroom-level: thank-you campaigns, adopt-a-classroom, clear-the-list drives, tutoring, reading heroes
- Community Partners: mentorships, school-business partnership, etc.



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Storytelling | *50 Stories for 50 Years*

Fifty Stories for 50 Years is a storytelling campaign honoring the people, moments, and milestones that have shaped WCPSS since the 1976 merger. Told primarily through the voices of today's students, these stories will explore how our past informs our present – and how the legacy of public education continues to inspire future generations.

How It Works:

- Students will lead story collection at schools across the district with support from teachers
- The district will curate and publish 50 stories during the 2025–26 school year that will reflect the wide range of people and experiences that make up our school communities – including differences in background, identity, geography, age, and perspective.
- A **Student Storytelling Toolkit** will include: Interview guides and media release forms, Tips for storytelling and ethical journalism, Templates for school/classroom integration
- Additional submissions may be included in a **community archive**, with hopes for a final **gallery or capstone showcase** to highlight student storytellers and voices



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Fundraising | *50 Forward*

Fifty Forward Fundraising Drive is a community giving campaign inviting individuals, alumni, families, and business partners to contribute in honor of WCPSS's 50th anniversary. Proceeds will support student needs and opportunities such as the WCPSS Angel Fund.

How It Works:

Community members will be invited to give:

- \$50 for 50 years – or any meaningful amount
- In celebration of a school, teacher, milestone, or memory

Campaign will be promoted through:

- District and school newsletters
- Social media and storytelling tie-ins
- Special events and recognitions throughout the year

Contributions will support:

- Student assistance through the Angel Fund
- Other opportunities to be announced