**Observation Assignment of Board Meeting**

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board meeting

Date: Jan 11. 2017

1. Background Information

I watched the Board of Education Meeting which discussed the issue of student assignment in Charlotte. In fact, this is an issue that both parents and schools are concerned about, especially in China where parents living in first-tier cities attach great importance to buying a school-district house to allow their children to accept good education despite their own busy life in crowded cities. However, buying a great school-district house requires not only sufficient economic strength, but also more sacrifice of parents’ own life and interests. Therefore, the issue of student assignment is an international issue. At least, it exists in both eastern and western countries. Therefore, this meeting allowed me to reconsider this issue from the perspective of board members.

2. The Board of Education Meeting Observation Report

Beforehand meeting, superintendent Ann Clark put administrators Akeshia Craven-Howell and Scott McCully, who work with school choice and student placement, in charge of the student assignment project. At this meeting, Ms. Craven-Howell summited a report about student assignment plan. The purpose of proposing this report was:

▪ Reduce the number of schools with high concentrations of poor and high-need students.

▪ Preserve and expand successful schools and programs.

▪ Provide options for students assigned to schools that don’t meet state performance standards.

▪ Provide equitable access to “varied and viable programmatic options.”

▪ Make efficient and effective use of district resources, including buildings and buses, to reduce crowding and accomplish the other goals.

Ms. Craven-Howell proposed that the student assignment plan should be implemented in four phases. At the meeting, the work plan and schedule in Phase I and Phase II of this student assignment plan were discussed as highlights. All BOE members attended this meeting. With respect to implementation of this plan, they also proposed some specific problems in their own district as well as problems that they were concerned about. I summarized two major problems as follows:

The first one is communication, namely the communication and negotiation between schools and governments, communities, parents and investors. “This is only as good as the communication and marketing,” Superintendent Ann Clark said. I also think the most important part is the communication between schools and parents, because parents are the ones who decide which schools their children should go to. In addition, only when schools make all people know their advantages and school programs, can students and their parents make a wiser choice. At the meeting, it was also proposed that the cooperation between schools at all levels and communities should be further enhanced, and the cooperation among schools, including middle schools, high schools and colleges, should also be enhanced. In addition, relevant activities should be organized, allowing students to know the curriculum background of their future school. At last, investors are important. Money is always the basis for running a good project. Therefore, reasonable budget and investment are also important.

The second is time. “I’d rather have a great plan than just a basic plan that people are going to be complaining about 10 years from now,” board Chair Mary McCray said at the committee meeting that drew all nine board members. It’s obvious that implementing a great plan takes a long time. Thus, most board members held the viewpoint that the work plan for the Phase I should be executed in a simple way. However, it will be a very complicated process to reasonably allocate students to each district in Phase II. Some members even recommended that it’s necessary to adopt an extension to ensure the quality, while others believed that now is the best time to implement reform. With respect to this issue, it will be further discussed. At the same time, the board will keep trying to create another task force of local elected officials to support the effort and discuss how assignment questions are entwined with housing policies, economic opportunities and other community issues.

3. The Reflection on Board of Education Meeting

After spending one hour on watching the video and taking into teacher leadership we previously discussed in class, I summarized following five points:

* “Smart leader should benefit of employee participation-better mobilization of group member, better organization operation and make more effective decisions.” - Rationales for teacher leadership. All board members actively participated in this meeting, and made effective decisions.
* “Speaking up constructively.” Every board member of each district proposed the problems for their own region and tried to solve them. In addition, they hoped the plan can be implemented better.
* “Power of collaboration.” District 5 BOE member Eric Davis said he’s confident in CMS’s ability to carry out what’s promised, but recognizes they can’t happen without community partnerships. A positive cooperation atmosphere should be created. At the meeting, it was proposed that all districts and relevant government agencies should actively give support to each other.
* “Take responsibility” - Sherri Miller, Director of Literacy. Every member considered issues in others’ shoes. They tried to consider issues from the perspective of parents and schools, so as to propose suggestions on reform.
* “Communication skills. “Implementation of each plan requires communication. Only with repeated communications and discussions for mutual reference and learning, can better results be achieved.