

# Eastern Wake News

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Advocate Toshiba Rice joins eastern Wake's cries for school improvements  
At meeting, advocate calls for change

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KNIGHTDALE - Desperate to reverse education trends in eastern Wake County – high suspension rates, lower-than-average graduation rates, and rising transfer rates – advocate Toshiba Rice called on parents and school officials last week to organize a push toward change.

"For too long, the needs of this region have been ignored," Rice told a crowd of about 50 people on May 17 at Knightdale Town Hall. "This is a cry for help ... and the beginning of taking action against negligence."

The meeting came on the heels of recently released student assignment information showing that nearly all Knightdale schools were under-chosen using the school system's "choice" plan.

Local education advocates say eastern Wake County and Knightdale, in particular, have an extraordinarily high percentage of impoverished students attending local schools. Who says: need statistics here.

Rice says the high poverty levels hurt student achievement and leave eastern Wake schools with less financial support.

She called on parents to become more involved with their child's education and for the Wake school board to devote more of its resources to the region.

"We have good teachers here, great teachers in fact, but the high number of students with behavioral or learning issues is a lot for any teacher to deal with," Rice said.

With her meeting, Rice, who runs Track My Steps, a Triangle-wide academic support organization, joined a growing choir of disgruntled parents.

Knightdale Mayor Russell Killen and a handful of local teachers and parents formed Knightdale 100, a local advocacy group, in 2009. Since then, Knightdale 100 has held monthly forums on topics ranging from improving student performance to understanding student assignment.

Rice says she'll play her hand differently.







At the meeting, she organized committees to tackle five goals:




Toshiba Rice discusses eastern Wake County schools with school system administrators at her meeting in Knightdale on May 17.

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Next meeting 7 p.m. on August 16 at Zebulon Town Hall – 1101 North Arendell Avenue. For more information, call

 **919-576-9867**  or email

[wake@trackmysteps.org](mailto:wake@trackmysteps.org).

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reducing suspensions, improving early education, improving student achievement, expanding course credit selection, and educating students on their in-and-out-of-school resources.

"Each committee will determine plans of action that need to be taken, then they'll follow-up with parents and school officials to gauge progress," Rice said.

So, while those in Knightdale 100 do their bidding behind the scenes, Rice will have a committee member at every school board meeting to lobby for eastern Wake County and hold politicians accountable.

"We are thrilled that there are others out there so passionate about education in eastern Wake," said Shannon Hardy, of Knightdale 100. "We need more agents of change."

If only for one night, Rice did, indeed, put the spotlight on eastern Wake.

Her meeting drew several media outlets, school system administrators, and politicians such as N.C. House Rep. Darren Jackson and Knightdale Town Councilman Dustin Tripp.

Also, a few school board members sent letters of encouragement.

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