



# PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS

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Dr. Mark R. Jones  
Division Superintendent

## Support Staff Advisory Committee March 22, 2016 Minutes

A meeting of the Support Staff Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, March 22, 2016, at 10:00 a.m. at the School Board Office, Chatham, Virginia. There were 11 members present.

Also present were Dr. Mark Jones, Division Superintendent, Ms. Ann Cassada, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, Dr. Jeff Early, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, and Ms. Teresa Petty, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.

Dr. Jones called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. Introductions followed. An agenda was provided. Dr. Jones invited committee members to add items to the agenda for discussion.

The following concerns were expressed by committee members:

- A committee member expressed thanks to the maintenance staff that ensured a safe entry into buildings during the inclement weather. A comment was made that it is very difficult for only one custodian (in smaller schools) to provide snow removal for the entire building. A request was made to consider providing additional assistance in these circumstances. Maintenance will be contacted relative to this request.
- A concern was expressed regarding alarm systems going off at night and the length of time individuals have to wait for a deputy to arrive. Protocol indicates that individuals should not enter a building without a deputy present. Dr. Jones will share the concern with the Sheriff's Department.
- A concern was expressed about water accumulating at the entrances to the Regional Alternative School and the STEM Academy when it rains heavily. Students have to walk thru deep areas of water to access the building. A maintenance worker and committee member explained that the water is not draining properly causing the water to back up at the doorways. He said that re-paving the parking lots should help improve the situation.
- A concern was expressed regarding parents sending children to school when they are ill and have a fever. Ms. Ann Cassada, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, stated that this is addressed in the school handbooks. Policy states that a person should be fever-free for 24 hours without medication. When this directive is not followed, school nurses follow up by attempting to contact parents and assist children as needed.

### Reports from Assistant Superintendents

Dr. Jeff Early, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, addressed the following:

Technology update:

- The IT Department is in the process of changing over the website to a new webhosting service. Staff is working diligently to ensure that problems are handled during the

transition. A modern re-design of the website is planned once the change has taken place.

- Ms. Kim Clifton and other members of the IT Department are working hard with the Instructional Department of the Graduate of Merit production.
- The PCS technology plan is being updated to reflect long term goals including – upgrading infrastructure, upgrading student, teacher, and administrative computers, expanding wireless access at all schools, expanding Cisco phone systems, installing new signage.

Maintenance update:

- The Maintenance Department is working to replace all of the lighting in the high schools and middle schools. This work will take place during the evenings and at night without any disruptions to students or staff.

Safety update:

- State-wide tornado practice drill was held March 22, 2016. All division locations participated. Appreciation was expressed to all for a smooth drill.

Ms. Ann Cassada, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, addressed the following:

Health Services update:

- Ms. Cassada expressed her appreciation to nurses and nurse coordinators for the work that is being done at this time of the year. Health care staff are busy assisting with the process of screening for kindergarten. In addition, T-dap clinics have just been completed with 300 students being vaccinated. This is about half of the anticipated students that will be transitioning to middle school. The t-dap vaccination is required for all students entering middle school.

Transportation update:

- The Director of Transportation will be retiring at the end of August. The position is currently posted and Ms. Cassada hopes to have a recommendation to present to the School Board at the April board meeting.
- There is a continued, urgent need for substitute bus drivers. The application is available at the School Board Office and training will be conducted in the summer at the Transportation Department.

Special Education update:

- The Special Education Department has implemented the Read Naturally program for students with disabilities and plans to expand the program to the elementary schools.
- IEP spring checkout procedures are going well.
- Meetings are being conducted for students in transition from one level to another. The meetings are being held at the receiving schools and seem to be going very smoothly.

Ms. Teresa Petty, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, addressed the following:

- A copy of the 2016-2017 division calendar was provided. The first day of school for students is August 10, 2016. The November Thanksgiving holiday will begin on Wednesday again this year. Spring break is set for March 20-24, 2017 with another short

break scheduled on Apr. 14 and 17, 2017. These dates are holidays for all division employees. The last day of school will be May 25, 2017.

- Graduate of Merit program will be held on May 12, 2016 at Averett Conference Center. There are 129 Graduate of Merit recipients this year. Awards include a \$100 community scholarship that is awarded to all GOM recipients. Additional scholarships include the Superintendent's Award, the Pinnacle Award, Above and Beyond scholarships as well as scholarships from local colleges, universities and businesses. Dr. Jones urged committee members to attend a Graduate of Merit program if they are given the opportunity because it truly is a wonderful evening that showcases the students of Pittsylvania County Schools.

Dr. Jones provided the following information in the absence of Dr. Lillian Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Administration:

Budget Update:

- The Governor's proposed budget indicates that Pittsylvania County Schools will receive \$2.6 million. Once the budget is passed, those monies will be used to provide a 2% raise for all staff, increase VRS rates, pay an additional \$400 per year towards employee's insurance. In addition, eight positions will be added, the transportation department will enter into a lease agreement for nine school buses, there will be upgrades to technology (projectors and computers). The Board of Supervisors passed their budget and Pittsylvania County Schools will hold a hearing to pass the Division's budget on March 24, 2016. He also stated that if the economy continues to rebound, next year looks favorable for another pay increase.
- Vacancy Update: There are currently 34 classified and certified retirements and 16 resignations. This along with transfers will impact the need for staffing. Bus drivers and substitutes are in critical need. Additionally, the division will have a number of hard to fill positions including agriculture, technology education, art, music, Spanish, and math.
- Recruitment summary: Dr. Holland and the HR staff have scheduled five college recruitment events this spring. They will also be participating in the job fair at the Institute for Advanced Learning (IALR) in April for classified staff.

### **Superintendent's Remarks**

Dr. Mark Jones, Division Superintendent provided updates on the following:

Inclement weather:

- Dr. Jones asked for suggestions and feedback relative to how information was provided during the recent inclement weather situations. Dr. Jones received praise and appreciation for his efforts and the timeliness of relaying information to staff and parents. There were reports of poor reception for some phone calls. This is likely a system issue and will be addressed by the Technology Department.
- Dr. Jones discussed the tornado warning on February 24, 2016. Information about the approaching storm was provided to the Superintendent and the Director of Transportation

the day before and the storm was tracked all night and into the next day. As the storm progressed it was determined it would arrive earlier than expected. Schools were contacted. Buses were held. Parents were also contacted. Schools were contacted again relative to the warning status. Central Office Administration met the next day to review procedures with Jim Davis. It was determined that the use of pagers, radios and cell phones for points of contact were used appropriately. Schools were asked to debrief relative to situations at their individual locations. Several schools dealt with parents arriving at school during the storm to check students out and requested guidance on how that situation should be handled. Dr. Jones stated that the most important thing to consider was the safety of students and staff and the security of the building. He further directed administrators to allow parents to sign their child out and leave if they were satisfied that things were under control at their location. He stressed that schools must be prepared for all situations at all times. One committee member indicated that there seemed to be some interference on the pager when announcements were being made.

- Career tech update – the division offers a variety of great programs at the Career Tech Center. Completion of these programs can enable students to get good jobs right out of high school or with only a couple of years of community college.
- Legislative update - the future budget looks good for the Division. Dr. Jones reiterated the possibility of providing a raise for staff next year.

Dr. Jones thanked all committee members for their support and attendance. Minutes from the meeting will be shared with committee members. The meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.