



Support Staff Advisory Committee
October 7, 2014
Minutes

A meeting of the Support Staff Advisory Committee was held on Tuesday, October 7, 2014, at 10:00 a.m. at the School Board Office, Chatham, Virginia. There were 17 members present.

Also present were Mr. James McDaniel, Division Superintendent, Dr. Jeff Early, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, and Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Administration.

Mr. McDaniel called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. Introductions followed. He stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss division-wide initiatives including input and feedback on items relative to operational issues, school calendar, human resources issues, protocol, procedures, and other concerns that may be affecting members of the committee. School-related matters should be handled at the school first. An agenda was provided. Mr. McDaniel invited committee members to add items to the agenda for discussion. There being no additions to the agenda, the following discussions were held:

Reports from Assistant Superintendents

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

The new STEM Academy is in full operation. He invited committee members to stop by and tour the new facility.

Technology update - Dr. Early said that laptop carts had recently been installed at Twin Springs Elementary School and Tunstall Middle School. New computer labs have been installed at Chatham Middle School and Chatham Elementary School. Middle schools will also be receiving computers in math and science classrooms soon. The IT Department is busy installing numerous smart boards in classrooms. These have proven to be a lot of fun for students and makes learning much more interactive. About 200 have been installed thus far throughout the school division.

Safety update - Dr. Early, informed the committee that the annual school safety audits are being conducted at all schools. He indicated that the State has a safety checklist that is used by the committee during the audits. The Division will participate in an Earthquake Drill on October 16, 2014 at 10:16 a.m. (10/16 at 10:16). Additionally, lockdown drills (announced and unannounced) are held monthly. Schools are becoming more proficient each time these are conducted.

Pittsylvania County Schools received a State grant last year that was used to install key swipe machines at elementary and middle schools. Grant money received this year will

be used to install additional cameras in schools. Initially, all four high schools, Dan River Middle School, Gretna Middle School, Kentuck Elementary School and the Regional Alternative/STEM Academy will receive cameras. These cameras will allow individuals across division (the Superintendent, Police, IT Department) to log in and monitor the activity at these facilities.

Mr. McDaniel addressed information from the Support Services Department in Ms. Ann Cassada's absence. A memo regarding flu clinics was provided to members. Committee members were encouraged to sign up and take advantage of these convenient and economical clinics. Individuals were instructed to provide insurance cards at the clinics. If they do not have insurance, a fee may be accessed.

Medication training involving the administration of insulin and glucagon has been provided to individuals requiring that training as well as CPR and first responder training. In addition, a Consent to Carry Diabetic Supplies form was provided. The law was changed this year to allow students with diabetes to carry medications with them on the school bus and at school provided the proper protocol has been followed.

Mr. McDaniel addressed the recent outbreak of the Enterovirus D68 in the United States. A memo from the Pittsylvania County Health Department has been provided to parents and guardians of students. The memo included information relative to symptoms, transmission, treatment and prevention of the virus. Additional information has also been provided via the Pittsylvania County Schools website and parent portal. He stated that he is not aware of any local cases of the virus.

Mr. McDaniel shared information from the Instructional Department in Ms. Wanda Vaughan's absence. A memo that included SOL Pass Rates and Accreditation Ratings for Pittsylvania County Schools was provided. Elementary students improved in 10 out of 12 areas tested. Middle school students showed improvement in 9 out of 11 tested areas and high school students improved in 6 out of 11 areas tested. In addition, 16 of 18 schools in Pittsylvania County are fully accredited. He is very proud of this success and expressed appreciation for the contribution of all staff and employees to ensure the success of our students.

A memo regarding Graduation Site Selection was provided. Seniors at each of the four high schools vote on the site for graduation each year. All high schools voted to hold their commencement exercises at Averett University again this year. For the past several years, schools have voted to have graduation at Averett for a number of reasons including parking availability, a controlled environment, and plenty of seating room for guests. This year's graduation schedule was also provided in the memo.

A 2014-2015 school calendar was provided. Dr. Lillian Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Administration stated that the Ms. Wanda Vaughan and the Calendar Committee will meet in late October to begin discussion of next year's school calendar. Pittsylvania County Schools has already received a waiver to begin school prior to Labor Day next year. Dr. Holland indicated that the Division would likely follow a calendar similar to the one this year. Parents, guardians and other individuals that may

have concerns, suggestions, or input relative to the school calendar should contact Ms. Vaughan.

Dr. Holland provided a proposed budget calendar to committee members. Once the calendar has been adopted by the School Board, there will be opportunities for public input. She indicated that the Division is not expecting additional local funds for next year. The State has already indicated that local funds would be cut across the State. These cuts may affect the amount that schools receive from local funds. A 3-5% cut in State funding across the board is expected. For the past two years, the Board of Supervisors has provided above the minimum requirement of funding for schools. Dr. Holland is hopeful that they will continue this trend next year.

Dr. Holland shared a staffing update which included a breakdown of the number of Pittsylvania County Schools employees. This year 9 additional certified positions were added using the additional funds provided by the Board of Supervisors. Five more positions were funded by grants. The Division chose not to fill an administrative position at the School Board Office using those funds instead to hire 3 elementary counselors. One and one half custodial positions were also added. Dr. Holland stated that many individuals were hired to fill retirements and resignations as well. Nearly 100 new employees have been hired overall this school year. The Superintendent added that there are many vacant offices at the Central Office due to the decision to not fill positions there over the past several years, many of them administrative.

Dr. Holland provided information relative to the substitute teacher orientation sessions that were held earlier this summer. This requirement for substitute teachers was implemented last year. The orientation covers a variety of information including protocol, new policies, emergency drills, lesson plans, and classroom management. Mr. Clarke Scott, retired Director of Middle Schools, provided the training for all classes. According to feedback received, the sessions were very beneficial for attendees.

New this year were the orientation sessions for substitute cafeteria workers and substitute custodians. Cafeteria sessions included information related to food handling and food safety. The custodial sessions included additional OSHA training as well as demonstrations on the proper operation of equipment. Dr. Holland said these sessions also helped to narrow the list to include those individuals that would be dependable substitutes. In addition, para-educator training was also added by the Support Services Department this year for individuals that work in special education classrooms.

Report from the Division Superintendent

Mr. McDaniel expressed his appreciation to Mr. Mike Hutson, Director of Maintenance, and all maintenance staff and the IT staff for their efforts to complete the STEM academy. New electrical, lighting, plumbing, painting, furnishings, and technology are in place to provide a very unique opportunity for our students. A \$700,000.00 grant was used to purchase the STEM facility and install upgrades. This purchase included 8 acres of land and a facility valued at approximately 2.5 million dollars. Feedback from students attending STEM classes has been very positive thus far. Several committee

members indicated that their children have had an opportunity to attend the STEM academy and were very enthusiastic. There are plans to increase capacity next year and add new programs. School leaders are hopeful that interest in the STEM academy will help increase the number of students that will enroll in Governor's School, dual enrolment courses, AET, etc. in the future. The STEM Academy provides a great experience for all students, whether they are advanced students, or students with special needs.

The Academy for Engineering and Technology is another new venture for Pittsylvania County Schools and has also garnered positive reviews. The AET is held in the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, the same facility that houses the Regional Governor's School.

Mr. McDaniel provided a power point presentation to committee members relative to the demographic data for Pittsylvania County Schools.

Despite past challenges, the Superintendent is extremely proud of our success as a Division. With the economic downturn of the past several years, free and reduced lunch participation has increased considerably. Despite these figures, students and staff of Pittsylvania County Schools continue to excel. Over 99% of teachers and staff in Pittsylvania County Schools are considered highly qualified. Millions of dollars in grant funding have been secured to provide additional facilities, technology, and programs for our students. Division-wide, school attendance was exemplary last year and showed a 3/4 % increase over the past year.

In addition, graduation rates are at or above state records. Pittsylvania County Schools graduation rate is at 90% overall. Trends indicate that more students are pursuing an advanced diploma instead of a standard diploma. Last year over 3.5 million dollars in scholarships were awarded to county graduates. Also last year, for first time, every Graduate of Merit candidate received a scholarship at the awards banquet. The State drop-out rate has declined as well as the drop-out rate for Pittsylvania County Schools students. Student leaders continue to give the division high marks relative to school operations. Student suspensions rates have dropped 60% since 2001. Student expulsions have decreased 62%. Data indicates that students are behaving better and principals are handling discipline problems within their schools very effectively. These efforts are keeping students in school, receiving better grades and not losing credits.

Mr. McDaniel stated that everyone contributes to the reputation of the school system. All employees should take pride in the numbers the above data provided.

The next meeting of the Support Staff Advisory Committee will be held on Wednesday, January 14, 2015, at 10:00 a.m. at the School Board Office Boardroom. Minutes from the meeting will be shared electronically with committee members unless they wish to receive a paper copy. Individuals wanting a paper copy of the minutes should let Ms. Shari A. Dudley know. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.