

**MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
October 4, 2010**

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, October 4, 2010, at 2:00 p.m. in the School Administration Office, Chatham, Virginia.

Nineteen (19) schools were represented. Also present were Mr. James E. McDaniel, Division Superintendent, Dr. Jeff Early, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology, and Mrs. Cathleen Scolpini, Lead ITRT. ABSENT: Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.

The Superintendent called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. Introductions followed.

The protocol and organization of the Advisory Council was discussed. The purpose of the meeting is to share information about policies and programs and solicit input and feedback from the representatives relative to division level issues. School level issues should be addressed with the principal of the school. Representatives also have the opportunity to provide topics of discussion to be placed on the agenda or addressed at the meeting. Representatives were encouraged to e-mail topics to the Superintendent, Mrs. Janet Hancock or any one of the Assistant Superintendents. A notice of the meetings will be mailed to Representatives prior to the meeting date.

The following Council topics were discussed:

1. A question was raised about continuing on the school health insurance plan beyond the age of 65.
Employees are allowed to continue on the school health insurance as long as they are actively employed. Retired employees may also continue on the health insurance plan by paying the appropriate insurance rates; however, they are required to drop at the age of 65. This is the age when individuals become eligible for Medicare.
2. A concern was expressed about the lack of communication between the high schools and the Pittsylvania County Career & Technical Center. Some of the courses at the Career-Tech Center have customers scheduled to come in for services. When students leave early or are late arriving, the teachers at the Career-Tech Center need to be aware in order to reschedule the customers as necessary.
Most schools have a calendar of events. The high schools should be sharing this calendar with the Career-Tech Center. Radios have been installed on the school buses, and the drivers could contact the Career-

Tech Center if they will be arriving late. There needs to be better articulation between the schools. The high schools should be communicating with the principal at the Career-Tech Center.

3. A concern was expressed about a leaky roof at the Pittsylvania County Career & Technical Center. The maintenance department has been asked to look at this situation, and a work order was called in by the Administrative Assistant at the Career-Tech Center.

Carolina Roofing was contacted and will be at the Career-Tech Center on Thursday, October 7, 2010, to repair the roof leaks.

4. Questions were raised about any plans for the State revenue surplus money, if there may be any possibility of employees receiving bonuses like Halifax County Schools and if the stimulus money could be used to reinstate steps on the salary schedules.

There was a surplus of \$18 million for the State of Virginia. However, this amount must be divided among 133 school divisions. This will mean approximately \$150,000 more for Pittsylvania County Schools in sales tax. This amount may increase to \$180,000. This is a very small amount for an \$80 million budget. One item of significance is the passage of the Federal Education Jobs Bill which will provide \$2,389,890 of one-time funds for Pittsylvania County Schools. These funds must be used to recall, rehire, retain or hire new employees and for salaries and benefits for school-based employees only. The stimulus money (totaling approximately \$1.8 million) will no longer be available after the 2010-2011 school year. It is the hope that the Federal Education Jobs Bill funds may be used to make up for the loss of stimulus money. There is a possibility that any remaining funds from the Jobs Bill may be used to provide bonuses, hire new teachers or reduce class sizes. The School Board Budget Committee will discuss these issues as the 2011-2012 budget is developed. A 5% salary increase for all employees would cost approximately \$2.5 million. The health insurance premiums for the 2010-2011 school year did increase. Employees that are being paid from the stimulus funds will be placed under the regular budget codes as resignations and retirements occur.

5. A question was asked about the possibility of offering a stress management class for teachers and the consideration of providing professional services for teachers at no cost.

There are no plans at this time to offer a stress management course. However, Danville Community College offers this class, and funds are available to request tuition assistance if taking the course for recertification. The principals have training funds that could be used for some type of activity for teachers. The Superintendent indicated that he would speak with the principals regarding morale lifters for the teachers.

6. A concern was expressed about opening school for students on Election Day (November 2, 2010). Currently, parents have to complete background checks just to eat lunch with the children. The concern centered around individuals being in the school on that day.

As stipulated in the Code of Virginia, all registered voters are allowed on school property if they are there to vote. Students will be on a two-hour delay on Tuesday, November 2, 2010. All employees will report to work at the regular work time. The Superintendent will launch an AlertNOW message to all parents and employees relative to the schedule for that day. An ERIP teacher aide will be present outside the voting areas to ensure no one wanders through the halls. Should there be any problems, the ERIP employee will be instructed to alert the principal. Appropriate security measures will be put in place to ensure the voters are kept away from the students. With school beginning earlier this year, there were no additional days in the calendar to count unless the semester extended beyond December 22. There are nine (9) elementary schools and three (3) high schools that serve as voting precincts. The school principals and Central Office have worked with the Voter Registrar's Office to ensure the best place for the voting area in each school.

7. A concern was expressed about having to use instructional funds to pay for printer toner for the special education teachers.

This is a budget issue. Teachers can obtain toner from other sources such as Amazon.com at a much cheaper rate.

8. A question was raised about teachers being assigned to morning and evening bus duty which extends beyond the number of hours in a workday and if any compensation could be received.

Professionals (including teachers) are exempt from overtime. The teachers work 192 days. However, the Code of Virginia requires a teacher to work a 200-day contract. Assignments may be made for the additional days beyond the 192 days. These assignments may include duties such as morning and afternoon bus supervision.

9. A question was raised about the school division's policy on duty-free lunch. The Standards of Quality recommend a duty-free lunch. This is at the discretion of the school principal.

10. A concern was raised about the middle school scheduling and the loss of instruction time because of the physical education and exploratory curriculum offered which coincides with the family and consumer science courses.

The schedule is designed to provide remediation and recovery time and more physical education for students. It was noted that the new schedule does provide the opportunity to incorporate more students into the exploratory classes and gives students more physical education. Dr. Lillian Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Mr. Clarke

Scott, Director of Middle School Education, and Dr. Brad Bryant, Director of Career & Technical Education, will be asked to discuss the instruction being provided in the exploratory classes to determine how it relates to family and consumer science courses.

11. A question was raised about the possibility of changing the block schedule to an A/B schedule for the high schools.

There have been no proposals for change to the high school schedule presented to the Superintendent or the School Board. Any changes would have to be presented to the School Board for approval prior to implementation. “Skinny” or split-block classes were discussed. Chatham High School and Tunstall High School offer 45 minute “skinny” classes. However, Gretna High School and Dan River High School are offering some of these same classes as 90 minute courses. The 45-minute “skinny” class is designed to be offered for a full year and a 90-minute “skinny” class for a semester. The desire is to have advanced placement (AP) classes offered as year-long courses so that the student could take the AP exam in the spring.

12. A question was raised about numerical grades and Grade Point Average (GPA) not being available in the parent portal.

The Instructional Department determined that the GPA and numerical grades would not be included as information in the parent portal. The GPA could be confusing for parents and may create competitive issues.

13. A concern was expressed about having committee meetings during planning periods, being required to use PD360 and mandatory teacher observations required at Chatham High School.

Teachers should remember that having duties or meetings during the planning period should not be seen as intrusive.

14. It was indicated that teachers feel overwhelmed. The teacher workdays are being taken for staff development, and planning periods are being taken away. A question was raised about the expectations during planning time.

The calendar includes professional development days and teacher workdays. Activities or staff training may be planned on staff or division professional development days. However, teacher workdays have generally been reserved for the teachers’ work time, but the principal may have the need to schedule a faculty meeting during that time as well. The Superintendent noted that there are some new administrators, and the expectations may need to be reviewed.

Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, addressed the following items:

1. The high school renovations/additions are approximately 99.5% complete at this time. There are some punch list items that still need to be completed.

The dedication ceremonies for Chatham High School and Dan River High School were held on Sunday, October 3, 2010. The ceremonies for Gretna High School and Tunstall High School were held on Sunday, October 10, 2010.

2. A copy of the Budget Calendar for the 2011-2012 budget was provided. Opportunities for public input for the 2011-2012 budget will be provided at the November 9, 2010, School Board meeting, the December 14, 2010, School Board meeting, the public session on January 27, 2011, and at the public hearing on March 24, 2011. The School Board invites and appreciates input on the budget from the employees and citizens.

Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, addressed the following items:

1. A personnel update was provided. There were 138 employees who retired or resigned at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. There were 96 individuals hired for the 2010-2011 school year. Forty-two positions were not filled for 2010-2011.
2. Copies of teacher salary schedules from area school divisions were distributed. The school system is very competitive at the beginning of the teacher salary scale; however, the salaries are less competitive beginning around Step 10. The Salary Taskforce will meet on October 20, 2010, to begin discussions about recommendations for the 2011-2012 school budget. Representatives were asked to share this information with staff members and to provide any suggestions for the budget to the Salary Taskforce.

Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology, addressed the following items:

1. In the past, the Division Technology Committee has consisted of citizens, teachers and staff. However, for the 2010-2011 school year, the composition of this committee will change. The Teacher Advisory Council, as well as other advisory councils, will provide input for this committee. There is a six-year Division Technology Plan that must be reviewed and revised as necessary.
2. There are 2,732 instructional computers in the schools. Of these computers, there are 1,880 that are over three (3) years old. The State indicates that these computers should be replaced; however, it would cost the school system approximately \$600,000 each year to replace the necessary computers. The amount of funding received for the Information Technology department totals \$575,000, which must be used to purchase computers, infrastructure and operational costs. The school system has a 5-6 year cycle for replacing computers. The high schools have state of the art equipment with voice over IP, video and high definition televisions. Projectors have been placed in most every classroom for grades 4-12. Document cameras have also been

provided. Plans include the possibility of installing projectors in grades K-3 classrooms. There are currently over 200 computers that have been infected with viruses which in many cases came from USB drives.

3. Representatives were asked what type of technology they would like to see in the classrooms. Items identified included projectors, document cameras, smartboards in the classroom, and a computer lab in the library at Kentuck Elementary School. It was noted that smartboards are obsolete because the technology is being built into the projectors. The State money received for technology cannot be used to purchase these. The library software is being reviewed for a possible upgrade. Information will also be provided to the librarians regarding the use of e-books.

A question was raised about the possibility of the PTO purchasing the smartboards to be installed in the classrooms. Mr. Parker indicated that the smartboard would need to be a wall mounted model in order to work with the existing projector. He did encourage the representatives to move away from the physical boards and look at other alternatives.

4. It was noted that there are empty classrooms at Twin Springs Elementary School that have computers. A question was raised about the possibility of providing these computers that are not being used to teachers who may not have computers or working computers in their classroom.

Dr. Jeff Early, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, addressed the following item:

1. The Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA) Assessment is designed for special education and limited English proficient students in grades 3-8 who know the material and perform at grade level but cannot show knowledge in a multiple choice format. The United States Department of Education has reviewed Virginia's testing scheme and are concerned about the high rate that VGLA is used. The math and reading VGLA will be eliminated, and criteria will increase for participation. The number of VGLA assessments will decrease based on these criteria and eventually will no longer be provided. A review is being completed to determine the possible replacement of the VGLA with the VMAST (Virginia Modified Achievement Standards Test) which is a combination of the Standards of Learning and the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP).

In the absence of Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, the Superintendent addressed the following items:

1. Congratulations were expressed to the schools for being 100% fully accredited for four (4) out of the last six (6) years. Twelve (12) of the eighteen (18) schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for this year. Last year there were fifteen (15) schools making AYP. The school system will continue to

strive to meet the standards and expectations for the Standards of Learning and the No Child Left Behind Act.

2. A Calendar Committee has been formed and will meet in November to discuss the 2011-2012 school calendar. A representative from the Pittsylvania Education Association (PEA) will sit on this Committee as a non-voting member. The Calendar Committee will review feedback and input provided to them regarding the calendar. The school division will be eligible for a pre-Labor Day opening for the 2011-2012 school year. Comments regarding the development of the calendar were encouraged from the Representatives.
3. There were no questions or concerns regarding the on-time graduation rates.

The Superintendent addressed the following items:

1. The Representatives were encouraged to talk with their principals to secure approximately 5-10 minutes during a faculty meeting to share items of discussion from the Teacher Advisory Council meeting.
2. Feedback was requested from the Representatives regarding Youth Sports.
 - The money that was used to purchase the televisions in the high schools could have been used for youth sports. An explanation was provided regarding the funding used to purchase the televisions. These funds were part of the bond referendum money which could only be used for high school construction and materials. One of the uses of these television sets will be as signage boards and will allow the Superintendent to deliver messages directly to the high schools if necessary. The high school additions/renovations projects came in at \$6.5 million under budget. Also, there was an estimated savings of approximately \$1.5 million in interest on the bond money. The school system's funding from the Board of Supervisors has been cut \$8.5 million over the past two years. An amount of \$125,000.00 was estimated for the use of the facilities by youth sports which was used to balance the 2010-2011 school budget. The school system spent approximately \$250,000 on facilities for the youth sports last year. There would be no affect on the high school sports programs which are supported by the Virginia High School League. The School Board allocates \$10,000 for each high school for these sports, and the schools are allowed to keep the gate receipts to run the programs. The youth sports programs include soccer, softball, baseball, basketball, football and cheerleading. These programs use the school system's facilities, lights and electricity. The

School Board has not been popular because of the decision to require a fee to be paid by the Youth Sports League.

- It was noted that the Board of Supervisors listens when there is room full of people before them relative to any issue.
 - According to the Commonwealth of Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, Pittsylvania County spent a total of \$27,780.00 on recreation which is \$.44 per capita. The average for counties is over \$50.00. In cities the average is over \$100.00 per capita. The Board of Supervisors is discussing the implementation of a recreation department.
3. Feedback was requested from the Representatives regarding the high school revitalization project which includes the upgrade of the Chatham High School athletic fields and a storage building at each of the four (4) high schools.
- It was suggested that the storage buildings should have been called a climate controlled area to store uniforms to avoid MRSA or mold.
 - There could be Title IX issues to arise at Chatham High School because of the inadequacies of the athletic fields.
 - The Board of Supervisors did approve funding in the amount of approximately \$900,000 to the school system but not for facilities as requested so that it could be used for revitalization. Instead, the Board of Supervisors approved the funding for instruction.

The Superintendent asked if there were any suggestions on how to improve this meeting. No comments were provided.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m. At the request of the Representatives, the minutes of the meetings will be e-mailed to all members of the Council.