

**MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
October 1, 2007**

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, October 1, 2007, 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. John W. Amos, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, and Mrs. Cathlene Scolpini, Lead Instructional Technology Resource Teacher (ITRT). ABSENT: Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, and Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology.

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

The protocol for the meetings was reviewed. Council members will be given the opportunity to provide items for discussion which will be addressed by the appropriate Assistant Superintendent. If there are items of discussion that Council representatives would like to have placed on the agenda, they may e-mail the Superintendent, Mrs. Janet Hancock or one of the Assistant Superintendents. School issues should be addressed with the principal of the school, and division issues should be addressed at this meeting. Following the Council topics, each of the Assistant Superintendents will provide informational items to the members. After their presentation of information, the Assistant Superintendents will be allowed to leave the meeting.

The following Council topics were discussed:

1. A concern was expressed about the scheduled make-up day being on one of the two (2) work days between the semesters. High school teachers are specifically concerned about the possibility of not having both days as teacher work days.

The Martin Luther King Day holiday generally follows these two (2) work days. The guidance department and administration work to ensure grades are entered into the system and repeaters are scheduled; therefore, two (2) work days were scheduled in the calendar to provide teachers and other staff the time needed for grades, planning and working on bulletin boards. Make-up days have to be placed in the calendar. Input on the proposed calendar is received from all interested parties. The State stipulates that the school system has to make up the first days that are missed in a school year. Make-up days are scheduled in the calendar as early as November. Bank time is also included as make-up days; however, the School Board has determined to use this (if necessary) later in the calendar. Council

members were encouraged to provide any suggestions relative to the calendar to the Calendar Committee or Dr. Lillian Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. The Calendar Committee will meet on November 6, 2007.

2. A question was raised about the air quality at the Regional Alternative School. A hole was recently discovered in the roof. The staff would like to make sure that the air quality above is not mold and requested that the air quality be routinely checked.

The hole in the roof has been repaired. If mold is found, it is removed immediately. Mr. Michael Hutson, Director of Maintenance and Facilities, and representatives from the County have checked the air quality. The staff will continue to check on this situation to ensure there is no mold growing in that area.

3. A concern was expressed about students taking a week off from school to go on a cruise or to the beach. These absences are allowed to count as excused absences. The teachers are concerned about the amount of time away from school and the instruction that is lost for the students. This is also an AYP issue.

The school system has a policy on absences and dismissals. According to this policy, vacation is not a reason for excused absences. However, the principal has the discretion to determine if the vacation or time away from school is an educational opportunity for the student. There is a protocol in the policy that allows for an appeal of decisions relative to absences. The appeal would be to the attendance committee for the school. The principal can also require a written plan relative to the vacation and how the student's work will be made up. The schedule for make up work is determined at the school/teacher level. It was suggested that this type of information be included in the school handbook.

4. The PEA has expressed a concern relative to the school system paying for the background checks for volunteers and not new teachers. The possibility of the school division paying for these checks for new employees was requested.

This would be a budget item, and staff will stress paying for employees in the future.

5. Department heads have requested to receive a stipend for the extra paperwork they are required to complete.

This would be a budget initiative. This suggestion should be provided to the individual serving on the Salary Taskforce for discussion relative to inclusion in the budget proposal. Lead teachers currently receive a

supplement of \$800; however, some department heads do not wish to be lead teachers.

6. It was suggested that teacher work days be designated as no meeting days to allow teachers to work in the classrooms (especially when school starts). Constant meetings are held, and there is no real time for teachers to get things done in the classroom. A concern was also expressed about having the division-wide inservice day on Monday (the first day of the pre-school workdays). The teachers did not object to having the inservice; however, Monday was not the best day. It was suggested that the division wide inservice be held on Friday of that pre-school week.

This school year was unique because of the workshop presenter's schedule. Traditionally, the Wednesday of the pre-school week was used as the division-wide staff development day; however, teachers did not like it on this day because they wanted to prepare their classrooms for open house. The staff development was then moved to Friday, but, according to feedback received, the teachers did not like Fridays because they wanted to be prepared for students coming in on Monday. The staff and Dr. Lillian Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, will review the possibility of moving the staff development day back to after open house and determine what may be the best day for this activity.

7. A concern was expressed about the bell schedules for the high schools. Specifically, one high school (Dan River High School) is beginning the school day five (5) minutes earlier. All high schools end the day at the same time.

Schedules may be different at each school; however, the work day for the teachers would be the same at each school (either 8:00 a.m. – 3:15 p.m. or 8:15 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.). A history of the bell schedule at Dan River High School was discussed. The additional time was added to accommodate a longer transitional time and lunch time.

8. A concern was expressed about the Danville Christmas parade being held on Saturday night and the safety issues involved for the students and staff. The band and JROTC students have participated in the past. The parade will set up on Langston and Risen Streets and return to the Community Market.

The Christmas parade is not sponsored by the school division. However, if staff believes there is a safety issue, the trip should not be approved. The principals and staff have the right to exercise autonomy in determining if the students should be allowed to attend.

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

1. The school division has added pre-school programs at each of the elementary schools. The pre-school program for Chatham Elementary School was added this school year. An old mobile unit was added at Chatham Elementary School to accommodate space needed for the pre-school program. An addition will be added to Chatham Elementary School this year at a cost of approximately \$800,000. This will provide the necessary classroom space for the pre-school program and the growth that the school has experienced.
2. A copy of the 2008-2009 budget calendar was provided. Each October, the budget process begins. At the November 13, 2007, and the December 11, 2007, School Board meetings, individuals are provided the opportunity to present budget requests. These requests may also be provided to the principal. The School Board will review the budget initiatives on January 24, 2008, and will hold a public hearing on the budget in March. Anyone may provide input on the budget. The 2008-2009 school year will be the first year of the biennium which is generally a good year for the budget. However, the State does have a budget shortfall at this time. Council members were encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities to come before the School Board with budget requests.

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

1. A staffing update for the 2007-2008 school year was provided. A listing of the specific positions that were filled for the year was distributed. The school division employs a total of 1,547 employees and is the largest employer in the County. The Superintendent expressed appreciation to Mrs. Knight, the Human Resources Department and the principals for their work in filling these positions.
2. A list of vacancies available at this time was provided. The school division still needs a Family and Consumer Science teacher. Council members were encouraged to contact Mrs. Knight should they know of any retired or new teacher that may be interested in this position.
3. A comparison of teachers' salaries within surrounding school divisions was provided. The school division is very competitive at the beginning of the scale but this dwindles at the top of the scale. Council members may wish to review this information with the Salary Taskforce representatives or co-workers.
4. Background checks for volunteers were discussed. This was a major project for the Human Resources staff and created a tremendous amount of work to complete. However, it was felt that the effort was necessary to ensure the safety of the students. Applications were received from 1,433 volunteers in the schools. The Human Resources staff visited five (5) locations and

completed fingerprinting and social services record checks for volunteers. Appreciation was expressed to the Human Resources staff and others that assisted in fingerprinting 782 volunteers. Volunteers are classified in two levels:

Level 1 volunteers include:

- Resource speakers, PTA volunteers (excluding officers), athletic concessions, science fair (judge), spelling bee (announcer), day field trips (guests only), field day chaperones, and lunch dates.

These Level 1 volunteers are required to:

- complete a Volunteer Certification Regarding Sex Offender/Child Abuse Status form which must be notarized
- must have an interview with the principal prior to volunteer services
- must wear a nametag
- must sign the daily sign-in record at the school.

Level 2 volunteers include:

- PTA officers, Booster Club officers, tutors, mentors, field trip chaperones (overnight), athletic coaches, library volunteers, day field trips (group supervision)

These Level 2 volunteers are required to:

- complete background checks
- complete a Volunteer Certification Regarding Sex Offender/Child Abuse Status form which must be notarized
- must have an interview with the principal prior to volunteer services
- must wear a nametag
- must sign the daily sign-in record at the school

The price for the record checks was reduced from \$47 to \$26 per person. The staff is currently pursuing the possibility of a grant to assist with the cost of these record checks. Some of the elementary principals did make the determination that all parents going on field trips would be classified as Level 2 volunteers.

In the absence of Mr. Rickey Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology, Mrs. Cathlene Scolpini, Lead ITRT, addressed the following issues:

1. iSafe training was discussed. The State Department has mandated that every student receive training on internet safety. In order for the teacher to teach internet safety, they must also be taught. In surveying the teachers to determine how the iSafe training would be conducted, the teachers desired something similar to the OSHA on-line training sessions. No agreement has been made on how to conduct the iSafe training; therefore, it has been tabled

and will not be completed on-line at this time. An e-mail will be provided to the teachers to update them on the iSafe training.

2. Attorney General Bob McDonnell recently visited the school division. Delegate Robert Hurt's office coordinated the visits which included Attorney General McDonnell visiting Twin Springs Elementary School and other representatives from his office visiting Dan River Middle School and Gretna Middle School. Attorney General McDonnell read the book "Faux Paw" to the students and discussed internet safety. A visit had also been planned for Chatham High School but had to be cancelled because of the lunch schedule.
3. Training will begin on October 1, 2007, for the electronic report card for the elementary schools. Complaints have been received about only being able to input letter grades. The grade book is to be used for subjects that require a grade. Teachers were asked to keep an open mind as they begin to use this program.
4. New teachers did not receive the information relative to the completion of the Technology Standards at the orientation session this year. The ITRTs will be providing this information to the new teachers. Information will be provided to the principals at their next meeting on October 10, 2007.
5. The locally developed high school, elementary school and middle school assessments will be provided to the schools. The principals receive a form to order the appropriate number of assessments needed for each school.

Dr. John Amos, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, addressed the following issues:

1. The School Board policy manual is now on-line. Individuals may review adopted and proposed policies on this site. Any issues relative to policies should be submitted to Dr. Amos or Mrs. Janet Hancock. There are still a few bugs to work out for the policy manual. Staff is currently working to implement a search engine that would allow individuals to search the policy for specific items or issues.
2. The Virginia State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report Calendar was provided. This calendar shows the evaluations that are required for the special education department. One item that is evaluated is the percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma. There will be more information provided from the State relative to inclusion. The special education staff is working to determine the necessary steps that need to be completed to meet the criteria for each of these indicators.

In the absence of Dr. Lillian Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Mr. James McDaniel, Division Superintendent, addressed the following issues:

1. The 2007 accreditation ratings were discussed. The school division is proud to have 17 of 18 schools to meet accreditation standards. Gretna Middle School did not make accreditation; however, the school did experience great gains in mathematics. There was a new mathematics tests that was implemented last year that created some issues for school divisions across the State. Accolades were expressed to schools for their work. The specific assessment results were reviewed. Several of the schools received very high results:
 - a. Chatham Elementary School – 3 out of 4 areas scored in the 90s
 - b. Gretna Elementary School – 3 out of 4 areas scored in the 90s
 - c. Hurt Elementary School – 4 out of 4 areas scored in the 90s
 - d. Twin Springs Elementary School – 4 out of 4 areas scored in the 90s
 - e. Tunstall Middle School – 3 out of 4 areas scored in the 90s
 - f. Tunstall High School – 2 out of 4 areas scored in the 90s
 - g. Last year 26% of schools scored in the 90s; this year it was 33%
 - h. Last year 47% of schools scored in the 80s; this year it was 60%
 - i. Last year 24% of schools scored in the 70s; this year it was 6%
 - j. Last year 3% of schools scored in the 60s; this year it was 1%The school division is experiencing continuous improvement. Appreciation was expressed to the staff, students, parents and administration on their work.
2. The locally developed assessments have been delivered or will be provided to the schools.
3. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is the gorilla on the school division's back. This year will be the first year that the benchmarks for AYP will exceed the State benchmarks for accreditation. Currently, the AYP rate is 71% in English and 73% in mathematics which exceeds the 70% passing rate for every subgroup. Next year, the AYP rate will increase by 4 points and an additional 4 points in the succeeding year. Last year there were 12 schools that made AYP. This year there were 13 schools that made AYP. However, for the first time, the school division did not make AYP this year. There were 29 indicators that had to be met. These indicators must be met by each of the 18 schools. This means there are 522 possibilities for the schools to be successful. There were only 11 indicators that were not met which is a score of 98% overall. However, the school division still failed to meet AYP. Compliments were expressed to the staff for their work. The process will only get more rigorous.
4. The SOL recognition banquet will be held at the Averett North Campus Center on October 18, 2007. All staff members have been invited to attend. Dr. Holland had discussed the possibility of continuing this recognition banquet with staff and principals. One issue discussed was the possibility of recognizing schools for meeting AYP which is more rigorous than the SOL accreditation. A concern has

also been expressed about the lack of attendance from staff members from the schools. Council members were asked to provide to Dr. Lillian Holland any suggestions or their opinion on having the recognition banquets at the school, at Averett or to pursue another process.

It was noted that the Regional Alternative School is not recognized at this banquet. The Superintendent stated that this would be reviewed.

It was suggested that a regional recognition dinner be held at each of the middle schools rather than having one (1) large recognition dinner.

5. The 2008-2009 school calendar was discussed. The traditional holidays have been placed on the proposed calendar; however, the Calendar Committee will discuss other pertinent dates for make-up days and teacher work days. The Calendar Committee will be selected, and any suggestions or concerns should be addressed to Dr. Lillian Holland. The Council representatives provided the following suggestions/concerns:

- Teachers liked having the first day back in January as a Teacher Work Day. It was noted that this may not work every year because of the way calendar dates may fall.
- A question was raised about the probability of continuing to begin school the last week of August rather than after Labor Day. The process to request a waiver of the Labor Day opening was explained. It is believed that the school division would have at least 2 more years that would qualify for the pre-Labor Day opening.

The Superintendent discussed the Phase IV high school renovations. A short video about the upcoming bond referendum was shown. The renovations of the high school will be similar to what was completed at Brosville Elementary School. Upon completion, the high schools will have central air throughout the buildings. The items that were not approved to be included in the renovations plan include: expansion of the administrative wing and expansion of the library, gyms and band room. The cafeteria dining facilities will be expanded and may be similar to the food courts at the middle schools. Council representatives were asked to assist in getting the word out that this renovation plan is needed. The buildings, which are 40 years old, are beginning to decay. The Superintendent and School Board want to make sure the staff is educated about the bond referendum. Community information forums are being conducted at each of the four (4) high schools. Information about these forums was provided. A brochure relative to the bond referendum, frequently asked questions and information relative to the funding for the renovations plan was also provided. Council representatives were asked to review this information.

A question has been asked relative to having a meals tax rather than raising taxes to cover the costs of the renovations. This is not a School Board decision but one that would be made by the Board of Supervisors. If that is what is desired, individuals should

discuss this with their Board of Supervisors representative. If the meals tax passes, it would mean an additional \$650,000 for the County.

The Superintendent stated that he was now a proud resident of Pittsylvania County. He felt that ethically, morally and politically he could not live in the City of Danville and ask the citizens of Pittsylvania County to vote for the bond referendum.

The Superintendent asked if there were any suggestions on how to improve this meeting. No comments were provided. Council representatives were asked to e-mail the Superintendent or Mrs. Hancock if there should be any comments or suggestions.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.