

MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
April 4, 2011

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, April 4, 2011, at 2:00 p.m. in the School Administration Office, Chatham, Virginia.

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

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

The following Council topics were discussed:

1. Congratulations were expressed to the students from the Pittsylvania Career & Technical Center for their showing at the recent State competitions in Hampton, Virginia. There were three (3) national winners in the group.
2. A concern was expressed about teachers being charged for sick leave or personal leave days when no substitute was used during their absence.
The school principal has the autonomy to make decisions relative to using substitutes. Substitutes in the building may be used to fill in for a teacher during an absence. Substitutes are not paid for planning periods. The administration tries to utilize staff members to the best advantage for the school. If teachers are not at work, they must use sick leave, personal leave or leave without pay.
3. A concern was expressed about testing and high school scheduling duties having to be completed at the same time.
Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, will discuss this issue with the individual school administration.
4. A concern was expressed about Spring Break not coinciding with surrounding school divisions.
Input for the 2010-2011 school calendar was received from staff as well as through the Calendar Committee. The staff and School Board must consider what is best for the students and teachers of Pittsylvania County Schools. The decision to have a different Spring Break was because of Easter occurring so much later in the

calendar year. At this time, Danville City does not have the option to open schools prior to Labor Day. However, they may consider requesting an alternate opening based on the new Roanoke Law that allows school divisions to open before Labor Day if surrounding divisions are doing so. The 2011-2012 school calendar has been approved and does include Spring Break which will follow Easter Sunday.

5. A question was raised about teachers receiving gas mileage reimbursement when principals require them to attend a conference. Each school receives a limited amount of money for training purposes. The principals use their discretion as to how these funds are disseminated. In order to stretch the amount of funding, there may be times when teachers are not reimbursed for mileage or hotel rooms. On the division level, staff will carpool from the School Board Office; however, if a staff member desires to drive separately, they are responsible for their own travel expenses.
6. A question was raised about the time of departure for one-half leave days. For teachers, one-half day ends at 11:30 a.m. Some Representatives expressed that this was not the time used at their particular school. The School Board policy states a work day for teachers is 8:15 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. The Superintendent will discuss this issue with the principals at the next Principals' and Supervisors' meeting in order to have consistency within the system.
7. Many staff members expressed concern about not being paid before Spring Break began. There was also some confusion about where to pick up checks or vouchers.

This was a calendar issue. Staff did not think about having payday before Spring Break. This issue was discussed by the Superintendent with the principals at the March 10, 2011, Principals' and Supervisors' Meeting. School Board policy indicates that payday will be the last working day of the month. All 12-month employees were required to work on March 31, 2011, which would have been the last working day of the month. Staff will try to be more mindful of these types of issues in the future. Once this issue was brought forward in March, there was not sufficient time in order to complete all of the necessary payroll issues in order to pay before March 31, 2011. If all staff members had direct deposit, they would not have had to go by the school to pick up the check. Each individual school determined how checks were to be distributed. This should have been communicated to staff. The Superintendent will discuss the communication issue with the principals.

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

1. The annual Graduate of Merit banquet has been scheduled on May 19, 2011. There are 118 students identified for recognition at the banquet. Sponsors have been secured for all of the students; however, scholarship sponsors are still needed.
2. A copy of the 2011-2012 High School Course Selection Guide was provided to each Representative. This guide provides every detail necessary for students to plan for graduation. Representatives were encouraged to review and share with other staff.
3. The Statistical Profile brochure was distributed. This brochure shows pertinent information relative to the school division, such as accreditation ratings, the schools achieving No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), Standards of Learning, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) results, Stanford 9/10 results, On-Time Graduation Rate, Completion Rate for Ninth Grade Students Entering High School, schedule for Textbook Adoptions, September 30 Membership and Free and Reduced Lunch. It was noted that approximately 50% of the students attending Pittsylvania County Schools are receiving free or reduced lunches, and the number is growing.

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

1. A report was provided on the recent Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) visit. Representatives from the VDOE reviewed all of the over 1300 Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). They also visited seven (7) of the schools including Gretna Elementary School, Southside Elementary School, Twin Springs Elementary School, Chatham Middle School, Tunstall Middle School, Dan River High School and Gretna High School. Representatives reviewed the IEPs from the private day schools as well. It was determined that Pittsylvania County Schools was in substantial compliance with all requirements. However, there were a few areas, mostly limited to the IEPs, to be addressed. Most of these areas have already been corrected. The VDOE was very complimentary of the staff at the schools and the Central Office. Appreciation was expressed to the special education teachers and staff for their work.

In the absence of Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Dr. Jeff Early, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, addressed the following items:

1. A listing of employment vacancies for the 2011-2012 school year was provided.
2. A summary was provided of the resignations and retirements effective at the end of the 2010-2011 school year.
3. A schedule of the recruitment trips for the 2010-2011 school year was distributed.
4. The Behavior Management Taskforce met and discussed the Student Code of Conduct. The Taskforce did not recommend any changes; however, there were concerns expressed for “skinneys” jeans, e-readers (such as Nook or Kindle) and wireless air cards.

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

1. A summary of the 2011-2012 budget was provided. The proposed budget has been approved by the School Board and submitted to the Board of Supervisors for consideration of approval. The Board of Supervisors will only provide the minimum amount of funding as required by the State. The budget proposal includes the following:
 - a. State Revenue increase of \$386,371.00
 - b. Increase in VRS rate of 2% (\$960,000.00)
 - c. Loss of one-time revenue funding for special education assistants (\$200,000.00)
 - d. Loss of Federal Stimulus funding (\$1,800,000.00)
 - e. Receipt of Federal Jobs Funds (\$2,400,000.00)
 - f. Potential funding cut by Board of Supervisors (\$393,791.00)
 - g. Total Budget Cuts of \$567,420.00

The administrative staff reviewed the budget and recommended \$1,078,061.00 in cuts. The maintenance budget has been cut over \$800,000 in the last two (2) years. The purchase of buses has been delayed in order to cut costs. Health insurance will increase at least 7% because of the Health Reform Act and the buydown that the School Board approved last year to help reduce the health care costs. The employees will not receive raises nor bonuses, and there will be no new initiatives for the 2011-2012 school year. Representatives were reminded that the Federal Jobs Money will be one-time money available for the 2011-2012 school year only.

A question was raised about the possibility of projecting forward for cuts in the budget and consolidating programs or schools.

There are issues with consolidating especially with special education students because of the mandates that must be met. The instructional day must be 5½ hours. A consolidation may require a student to have a much longer bus ride to and from school. Special education also has a limit on

the number of students that may be served in one class. The school system is currently sharing librarians, guidance counselors and music teachers at several schools. The School Board has not cut anyone's job at this time; however, the division may be facing additional losses in funding in the future. The school system may need to look at the Standards of Quality (SOQ) in addressing class sizes and the number of physical education, guidance counselors, music teachers and administrators that may be required for schools based on the number of students enrolled. Representatives were asked to provide input on the budget as the staff continues to problem-solve budget issues.

Mrs. Kathy Buck stated that the PEA has requesting a meeting with Mr. J. Samuel Burton, School Board Chairman, to be held during the summer to begin discussions relative to the Reduction In Force (RIF) policy prior to the beginning of the budget process.

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

1. Teachers are requesting access to websites, such as CBS news. There are issues with opening sites such as this because of other sites that may be included (example: YouTube). The system that is used to filter sites categorizes the website addresses and does not provide specific sites that are included on the listing. YouTube has been released to teachers only. Students do not have access. Teachers were also asked to not give homework to students that may include viewing a website that is known to include inappropriate material.
2. A question was raised about losing United Streaming. The school system has been able to maintain United Streaming for another year. However, the costs are rising and only local funds may be used to pay for any associated costs.

The Superintendent addressed the following items:

1. The Representatives did not desire to have a meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council in June.
2. The PEA was very appreciative of the information provided relative to the proposed budget for 2011-2012.
3. There were no suggestions for improvements to the meeting format.
4. The Superintendent stated that his role is to ensure the long term viability and competitiveness of the organization. He indicated that this will be the fourth year without a raise for all staff members. He asked the

Representatives what they were hearing from colleagues relative to this situation. He asked if they were looking elsewhere because of no raise and less money in the pocketbook. It was expressed that the complaints are mostly about testing, programs and stress. The less experienced teachers may not be able to take the stress and feel that time at home is their time. The parental support is worse, the discipline is worse and everything revolves around testing. It is not necessarily the teachers with the least experience but those who are around the middle of the ladder. They do not feel rewarded for their hard work and dedication.

A question was raised about why the Board of Supervisors does not fund more for the school system. It was noted that the Board of Supervisors listens to people who address them. However, it must be a large group of individuals in order to make a difference. The representatives from the Board of Supervisors were invited to attend the Citizens' Advisory Council meeting on April 5, 2011. To date, there have been no confirmed attendances by the representatives. In order to keep a low tax rate for the County, the Board of Supervisors will reduce the tax rate if property values rise. The citizens of the County voted, by a margin of 64%, to show their desire to have increased taxes when the high school bond referendum was passed. The teachers were encouraged to contact their Board of Supervisors' representative.

5. Demographic information relative to Pittsylvania County Schools was provided.
6. Appreciation was expressed to the Representatives for the great work they do. The core of the success of the school system is in the teachers and people who work for the division. Teaching is difficult work and should not be entered into lightly. On behalf of the School Board, the Superintendent thanked the teachers and asked that they continue to work with the Board and staff during this difficult economic downturn.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:36 p.m.