

MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
January 27, 2014

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, January 27, 2014, at 2:00 p.m. The meeting took place virtually with representatives present at the four (4) high schools and the administration staff at the School Administration Office, Chatham, Virginia.

Eighteen (18) schools were represented. Also present were Mr. James E. McDaniel, Division Superintendent, Mrs. Ann Cassada, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, Dr. Jeff Early, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Administration, and Mrs. Wanda Vaughan, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.

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

The following Council topics were addressed:

1. A question was raised about using banked days prior to using the make-up days currently scheduled in the 2013-2014 school calendar. Also, if there are no school days missed during the year, the school year should end earlier. A request was also made to use a banked day or the Friday before Easter instead of having Easter Monday as a make-up day.
It was noted that the integrity of the instructional program must be maintained. Banked days are not the best ways to make up a missed day. The Superintendent has the discretion to use banked days during the fall semester should it become necessary because of inclement weather. This allowance for banked days ensures and protects the integrity of the instructional program, guards against any scrutiny of public opinion and shows a good faith effort to make up days as necessary.
2. A question was raised about the structure, expectations and curriculum for the STEM Academy, how students not attending the Academy will be affected and how the school division will pay for utilities.
The STEM curriculum will be aligned with the Standards of Learning. A Taskforce has been working to develop the curriculum for elementary, middle and secondary students. The purpose of the STEM Academy is not for only gifted students. The initial enrollment in the Academy will include students in grades 5, 7 and 9. These students will participate in inquiry-based learning at the Academy which will also support instruction in the regular classroom. Currently, the school division is paying rent of \$42,000 per year to the White Oak Outreach Center for the Regional Alternative School. This amount does not include approximately \$14,000 for custodial services. Should the school system obtain the old Woodlawn Academy property, the costs would be very similar. This amount does not include teachers and other operational costs.

3. A concern was expressed about the shortage of textbooks and resources for teachers. There is not enough funding to purchase textbooks, and class sizes are at a maximum.

Teachers should contact the appropriate director if there are not enough textbooks for the classroom. Extra textbooks have been ordered to ensure there are a sufficient number of books for the students. Principals have been informed to include the number of special education teachers in the count for manuals needed for the schools. Any issues with this should be addressed to Mrs. Wanda Vaughan, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.
4. A question was raised about requiring the student's input on attending school. This should be the responsibility of the parent.

Recent information published in the newspaper addressed a review of the Code of Virginia (22.1-254 (B) and School Board Policy JEG, Exclusions and Exemptions from School Attendance, relative to religious exemption. The Code and Policy state in part that "the School Board shall excuse from attendance at school any pupil who, together with his parents, by reason of bona fide religious training or belief is conscientiously opposed to attendance at school." This information was brought to the attention of the School Board to ensure that the school system is in compliance with these statutes. Religious exemption is based on a parent wishing not to send their child to school because of religious reasons or beliefs. There is no accountability for religious exemption. Upon receipt of a request for religious exemption, the Board grants approval and there is no additional contact between the school division and the student.
5. A question was raised about any changes in the paycheck schedule should the 2014-2015 school year begin after Labor Day.

At this time, the school division will not qualify a pre-Labor Day waiver. However, a waiver request has been submitted to the State based on the implementation of an innovative program that would affect every grade level and be essential to the community and economic development. The STEM Academy proposal would qualify as an innovative program. If approved, the school division would not have to make an annual request for waiver. There is also a bill being reviewed in the General Assembly to allow school divisions that received a waiver in 2011-2012 to keep the waiver status. Should the school year begin after Labor Day, the paycheck schedule for 10 month employees would be affected with the pay period beginning September 30 – August 31 (12 installments). The Calendar Committee will meet and develop a calendar to present to the School Board for approval. The Committee is waiting to determine if the waiver will be approved.
6. Information was provided relative to the STEM Academy. The proposed Academy is an innovative program that would be offered initially to all students in grades 5, 7 and 9. The students would be served in a central location to include a problem-based lab type setting. This is not a program for gifted students only. A grant has been written to seek funding to assist with the costs of this program.

7. A question was raised about the proposed teacher workday on May 24, 2014. Other suggestions (other than Saturday) were requested.
Saturday, May 24, 2014, has been removed as a teacher workday. It was determined that employees may have already made plans for this day.
Additional information regarding make-up days will be provided to the schools.
8. A concern was expressed about having regular and special education classes in trailers at the elementary schools and having to go between buildings during various weather conditions.
A capital needs study for the elementary schools and the Career & Technical Center has been completed. This study included renovations and upgrades such as new roofs, new windows, central air conditioning for the schools, the removal of trailers from all schools and building wings where additional space is needed to meet growing enrollments. The cost would be approximately \$44 million which includes \$11 million to renovate the Career & Technical Center and add a wing to house the Regional Alternative School. This renovation would provide opportunities to add and expand programs at the Career & Technical Center. The only way that this type of renovation program could happen is through the passage of another bond referendum such as the ones that were approved by the voters of Pittsylvania County for the middle schools and the high schools. The ultimate goal is to eliminate all trailers from the school grounds.
9. A question was raised about responsibilities of the School Resource Officer (SRO) and how having the SRO located in an office with no windows as opposed to being visible to parents and students could be safe for the school. The administrative assistant in the office is checking the identification of the individuals coming into the building.
The SRO and the principal of the school work as a team to ensure the safety of the school. The principal determines the routine and locations for the SRO during the school day. At Tunstall High School, there is a monitor for all of the cameras throughout the building, and the SRO can monitor these in his office as well. A schedule is determined by the principal for the SRO to oversee the building as well.
10. A question was raised about the possibility of having year round school. There are two options to conduct year round school – in school 9 weeks, off 3 weeks (intercession) with 2 of these 3 weeks being used as a remediation time for students to come back into the schools. The school division had considered a pilot program for those schools that were fully air conditioned. However, the cost would be prohibitive because of the need to have staff in the schools during intercession. The second option for year round school would be to have fall, winter, spring and summer breaks with a total of 180 school days during the year. It was requested that the individual who may have asked this question to

clarify the type of year round school that may be desired (traditional or attending school for 180 days in a year round setting with breaks).

11. A question was raised about the possibility of having a 10-point grading scale. School Board policy does not allow for a 10-point grading scale at this time. The individual asking this question was asked to contact Mrs. Wanda E. Vaughan, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, if there is interest in beginning any type of discussion relative to a change in the current grading scale.
12. A question was raised about the existence of steps on the salary schedule. The salary schedules have steps. Steps 1-5 on the salary schedule have the same salary because salaries were not raised for a five (5) year period. The Salary Taskforce has recommended that these steps be adjusted whenever funding may be available. This will take a considerable amount of money to correct the steps. Current efforts are being made to provide a raise for employees. The recommendations from the Salary Taskforce for the 2014-2015 budget is to maintain jobs, provide a 3% raise and no increases in health insurance premiums.
13. A concern was expressed about inconsistencies in delaying schools on Thursday and Friday (January 23 and 24, 2014). There was a concern about student safety when waiting for a bus in cold temperatures.

The roads were checked and very passable. There were no issues with buses on either of these days. Decisions relative to the closing or delay of schools are made based on an assessment of the roads and consideration of the safety of students and staff. On January 7, 2014, schools were closed based on single digit temperatures and a wind chill of 10-15 below zero. On this day, there were no issues with roads; however the cold temperatures were a factor. Delays may be needed to ensure that buses are operational and will crank on extreme cold weather days. The decision for delays and closing is difficult and basing the determination solely on cold weather is not a good precedent to begin. The school system has the responsibility for students and their safety. The parent has the responsibility to take care of the child at the bus stop and bringing them to school. Feedback will also be obtained from the Citizens' Advisory Council relative to the closing or delay of school.
14. The temperatures in some of the classrooms at Southside Elementary School are cold.

Dr. Jeff Early, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, will discuss this situation with Mr. Mike Hutson, Director of Maintenance & Facilities to determine the most cost effective way to resolve this issue.
15. A concern was raised about using funds to purchase a facility for the STEM Academy. It was felt that there was no money for raises but funds could be found to purchase a facility. A question was also raised about incorporating STEM

(Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) into the regular classroom or utilizing an existing facility.

The school system has applied for grants for the STEM Academy from the General Assembly and the Danville Regional Foundation. It is the desire to obtain these grants to fund equipment and infrastructure needed for the STEM Academy. It is anticipated that a decision will be made on the grant funding from the Danville Regional Foundation by March, 2014.

16. A question was raised about having alternative students in the same location as the STEM Academy since these students would be considered gifted.
The STEM Academy is not for gifted students. This Academy will serve as a pipeline for students to gain instructional and technological skills. The facility would also house the Regional Alternative School and the Horizon Academy which will afford these students with greater opportunities.
17. A question was raised about the controversy over children being home schooled.
The issue discussed by the School Board at its January 14, 2014, meeting related to religious exemption and not home schooling.
18. A concern was expressed about websites being blocked. Teachers are aware of many great websites for educational purposes; however, some of these sites, such as EDMONDO, are blocked. It was suggested that a committee of teachers be developed to review websites and address protocol for blocking and unblocking these types of sites.
The school system is required to have a web filtering software system in place. There may be some good instructional websites; however, there may be inappropriate photos that are housed on one facet of the site. By unblocking the website, these inappropriate materials would be accessible to anyone in the school system including students. Teachers were asked to contact Dr. Jeff Early or the level director to request the possibility of unblocking a site. The Information Technology (IT) staff and the instructional department would determine if the request to unblock would be appropriate.
19. A question was asked if the 6% increase for teachers proposed by General Assembly would be addressed.
Staff was unaware of a 6% raise being discussed by the General Assembly at this time. Governor McDonnell's budget proposal did not include a raise. If a raise is included in the State budget, the school system would have to provide matching funds. The budget process will be monitored over the next few weeks to determine the amount of funding that will be available from the State for the 2014-2015 school year.
20. A question was raised about any attempts to reform sick leave days.
There was a request to raise the amount paid for sick leave days at retirement from \$10.00 to \$20.00 per day. This request has been provided to the Budget Committee for consideration.

21. A request was made for more school-wide support of the required industry certification for Career & Technical Education (CTE). The CTE teachers feel that they receive the short end of the stick because Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments take 100% precedence. There are new requirements for the industry certification assessments, and the teachers would like to have someone to proctor or provide assistance with these tests.

Efforts have been made to schedule the certification and the SOL assessments based on lab availability. There has been no previous request made to the Instructional Department relative to the need for proctors or assistance on the CTE assessments. Staff will work with those involved with testing to determine availability of assistance.

Mrs. Wanda E. Vaughan, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, addressed the following items:

- The 2014-2015 calendar has not been developed at this time. Staff is waiting to see if the waiver for a pre-Labor Day opening is approved. There have been updates for the 2013-2014 school calendar because of the recent inclement weather. These updates will be posted on the website, and information will be provided to the schools.
- The 2014 Graduate of Merit program will be held on Thursday, May 15, 2014, at the Averett Convocation Center, Danville, Virginia. The deadline for applications was December 19, 2013. The applications have been submitted to the Instructional Department. The applications will be reviewed for accuracy to determine if the students qualify as a Graduate of Merit. Meetings have been held at the high schools and procedures were described for the Graduate of Merit program.
- The Fall 2013 SOL writing assessment results have been received. The results look good with all schools at 80% or above. There was a second chance testing during the week of January 21, 2014, which may improve the scores for the assessment.

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

- The computers in the high school labs have been replaced and updated. Staff is working to complete the process of updating computers using Windows XP to Windows 7.
- An update on the school safety audits and initiatives was provided. The School Safety Audit Team has completed its review of all schools. The following recommendations were noted by the Audit Team;
 - Provide School Resource Officers at each elementary school
 - Exterior windows and doors should be clearly labeled with room numbers and have red and green cards

- All schools should be practicing the lock down drills while students are in the cafeteria
- High schools should install security cameras in the halls and stairwells
- Classroom doors should be locked at all times.

The Audit Team also noted several commendations for the schools:

- All high schools and middle schools have a School Resource Officer (SRO), and elementary school have access to an on duty officer
- All schools conduct practice drill with one unannounced lockdown drill
- Cameras have been installed on many of the school buses
- Elementary and middle schools will have a keyless entry installed. Key swipe cards will be issued to staff to be used for identification purposes and entrance to the school building. The old identification cards will be collected and the employee will need to sign for the new key swipe cards. If the card is lost, the employee is asked to contact the Central Office so that the card may be deactivated and a new one issued. Teachers will have the availability to the school building from 7:00 am. – 5:00 p.m. on weekdays (Monday – Friday).

Mrs. L. Ann Cassada, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, addressed the following items:

- The December 1 Special Education Child Count report has been completed and submitted to the Department of Education. Special education services are provided to students ages 2-22 with disabilities. The percentage of the students in Pittsylvania County Schools receiving special education services has decreased slightly for the current school year; however, the percentage of students with disabilities remains constant at 13.67%.
- Information was provided on the Medicaid recovery program. Medicaid reimbursement may be requested for the following services: Occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, psychological services, transportation and nursing services. Services from these providers will be logged beginning January 6. The Department of Medical Assistance Services will assist with this process for reimbursement. The request for reimbursement will be an on-line submission. An administrative assistant has also been hired to assist in the Support Services Department and with this program. The revenue gained from the recovery of reimbursable funds will be used by the entire school system.
- The Tdap clinics have been confirmed for the rising sixth grade students. Information and dates for clips will be provided to the schools

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

- The budget proposal from Governor McDonnell has been received. This information is used to develop a budget proposal for the school system. This will be the first year of the biennium for the budget (2014- 2016). The School Board Budget Committee met on January 16, 2014, and requested the executive team to

review the budget initiatives and provide priorities for the 2014-2015 budget proposal. The focus for the Budget Committee will be to maintain jobs, maintain quality programs and maintain the viability of the organization. For 2013-2014, the Board of Supervisors provided funding above the local minimum requirement and additional money for the required Virginia Retirement System 1% employee rate. It is the hope that the Board of Supervisors will continue this funding level for the 2014-2015 school year. Part of the budget initiatives is to request a salary increase and ask the Board of Supervisors for assistance. The composite index is increasing which will mean less State funding but will require more local funding. There are a lot of decisions to be made relative to the budget. It is anticipated that the school system will receive \$289,000 in additional revenue for 2014-2015. The budget requests for 2014-2015 are over \$3 million. A draft budget must be approved by the School Board by its March 11, 2014, meeting and a public hearing and special Board meeting will be held on March 27, 2014, for final approval of the budget to be submitted to the Board of Supervisors for consideration.

- Information was provided relative to the new Virginia Retirement System (VRS) Hybrid Retirement Plan. News about this plan has been included in the Superintendent's Minute, and there are link provided on the website for employees to access additional information. Current VRS members under Plan 1 or Plan 2 have the opportunity to opt into the VRS Hybrid Retirement during a special election window from January 1 until April 30, 2014. Plans 1 and 2 are defined benefit plans (at retirement, employee is paid a monthly compensation based on age, total years of service credit, and average final compensation based on the highest 3 years of salary). The Hybrid combines the defined benefit plan and a defined contribution plan and offers a short-term and long-term disability program. This disability program is offered through Standard Insurance. The employee under the Hybrid plan must be employed for 12 months before eligible for short- or long-term disability. Short-term disability is defined as no longer than 125 work days. Any employee hired on or after January 1, 2014, will be enrolled in the Hybrid Retirement Plan. Under this plan, the employee will contribute 4% to the defined benefit component and the employer will contribute 1%; under the defined contribution component, the employee and employer must contribute 1% and then the employee may contribute up to 4 % with an employer match in increments of .25%. Teachers were encouraged to review the information relative to the Hybrid Retirement Plan and give careful consideration to any changes in the current retirement plan.
- The recruitment schedule includes visits to seven (7) different universities. These universities include Averett, Virginia State, and Winston Salem State. There are some challenging vacancies that will need to be filled for the 2014-2015 school year including special education, chemistry, English, trade and industry and adult education.

- Based on the 2014-2015 intent forms, it is anticipated that there will be 11 teachers, 5 cafeteria workers, 3 teacher aides and one administrator that will retire at the end of the 2013-2014 school year. There are also 3 teachers and 1 cafeteria worker who have indicated that they will not return for the next school year.

The Superintendent addressed the following items:

- The teachers were asked about receiving calls for inclement weather. The teachers expressed appreciation for the calls and felt they help assist parents in preparing for the weather and if they needed to be aware of any changes in school schedules. It was also noted that parents appreciated the fact that the Superintendent was on the scene and had the best interest of the students and staff at heart.
- An open house for the Academy for Engineering & Technology (AET) was held recently. There was lots of interest from students for this program. This academy is being fully funded by entities outside of the school system with no funds required from Pittsylvania County Schools. These entities include the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR), Danville Community College, New College in Martinsville, Virginia, Virginia State University and Danville Public Schools.
- The following legislative updates were provided:
 - House Bill #66 would allow the use of lottery funds to pay for a School Resource Officer in every school. If this bill is approved, the school system would realize a savings of \$90,000.00 (funding from two [2] SROs [Chatham High School and the Regional Alternative School]).
 - Senate Bill #131 would grant school divisions that received a pre-labor day opening waiver for the 2011-2012 school year eligibility to continue to have a waiver to open prior to Labor Day.
 - House Bill #63 deals with home school students participating in athletics. There has been some concern expressed from principals and other school divisions across the State relative to this bill.
 - House Bill #463 deals with putting all educational employees on the State health insurance plan.
 - House Bill #726 would allow suspended/expelled students to continue to receive services and credit for the full curriculum while out on suspension or expulsion.
 - House Joint Resolution #1 (HJ1) would implement a study for the feasibility of the Study Career Ladder program.
 - Senate Bill #270 would require third grade students to take English and mathematics Standards of Learning only. There is another bill that reduces testing from 34 to 26 assessments.

The Superintendent asked if there were any suggestions on how to improve this

meeting. It was suggested that agenda and materials be provided at the high schools for virtual meetings rather than sending by e-mail because teachers do not have sufficient paper to make copies. It was noted that the next meeting of the Advisory Council would be held at the School Board Office.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:07 p.m.