

**MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
March 26, 2012**

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, March 26, 2012, at 2:00 p.m. in the School Administration Office, Chatham, Virginia.

Eighteen (18) 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, and Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology. ABSENT: Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources. Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, joined the meeting in progress.

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

The following Council topics were discussed:

1. A question was raised about public access to teacher absences.
This information is not public. The individuals having access to information relative to teacher absences would be the individual teacher, the payroll department and the building principal. Salary above \$10,000.00 is considered to be public information; however, absences would be classified as part of personnel and not accessible through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
2. A question was raised relative to any policies that may address the requirement of minimum grades.
There is no School Board policy that dictates a minimum grade for a student. The final authority for grades lies with the teacher. The grade cannot be changed unless it is mutually agreeable between the teacher and the principal. The only exception would be if the IEP dictates a certain grade requirement for a student.
3. A concern was expressed about teacher accountability as it relates to student performance and if there may be any accountability for the student.
Dr. Lillian Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, and Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, have attended a conference on the performance evaluation instruction. A student may be removed from a teacher's class for disciplinary issues. Other areas of accountability for students include grades, student code of conduct and academic

performance. Any ideas to improve student performance would be appreciated.

4. A concern was expressed about having enough science and mathematics textbooks when new books are adopted.
English textbooks will be adopted this year; and Science textbooks will be adopted next year. This information will be reviewed with Dr. Lillian Holland, Mrs. Ann Cassada, Director of Secondary Education, and Ms. Tonda Finney, Executive Administrative Assistant for Instruction/Textbook Clerk.
5. A question was raised about the possibility of ten-month employee receiving an August paycheck.
The possibility has been discussed for new employees to receive a paycheck in August. All other employees would have had the opportunity to select the twelve (12) month pay option.
6. A question was raised about any available funds to offset the costs of school retirement celebrations.
Events planned by the individual school would be their expense. The School Board has a retirement celebration for all retirees. The luncheon has been scheduled for Friday, May 11, 2012. All attending retirees would receive the entire day off from work.
7. A question was raised about an update for the software on the computers.
Staff members should submit a work order if software needs to be updated.
8. A request was made to schedule the Career-Tech Center orientation visit for rising ninth grade students in the fall semester rather than during the spring. This would allow more time for students to determine career goals and also would not interfere with SOL assessments.
The Superintendent will discuss this with Mrs. Angela Rigney, Director of Career-Technical Education, to determine the most appropriate time to schedule the orientation visits.
9. There were several career and technical courses omitted from the student registration form. The instructional office was contacted; however, it was indicated that the form could not be redone. Therefore, the guidance counselors were instructed to notify the students of the omission.
The Instructional Department had developed a uniform registration form to be used by all schools. The Superintendent will discuss this issue with Dr. Lillian Holland and the instructional department.

10. A suggestion was made to eliminate the opportunity for students to attend the Governor's Schools. The courses offered at this school are the same as those that may be obtained through the high schools.

It was noted that this option was given strong consideration during the 2012-2013 budget discussion. The students currently enrolled in the Governor's School for 2011-2012 would need to be given the opportunity to complete the 2012-2013 school year.
11. A question was raised about the validity of rumors that are circulating regarding teachers being moved to different schools.

The staff has reviewed possible vacancies for the 2012-2013 school year. In order to maintain equitability in all schools, transfers will be necessary. Employees have been reviewed based on current residence and may be requested to transfer to another school or location for next year. The staff will be discussing these transfers with the identified employees.
12. A question was raised about class sizes for the 2012-2013 school year.

It is anticipated that class sizes may increase for 2012-2013.
13. An update was requested on the recording of School Board members. It was noted that voice records are very inexpensive. There may also be other cheaper ways to record these meetings.

Staff was encouraged to submit any ideas that may produce a quality product. These ideas would be reviewed to determine feasibility.
14. A concern was expressed about the recent Superintendent's visits to the schools. The teachers felt they were being observed rather than providing them the opportunity to talk with the Superintendent. The teachers also expressed that they did not receive feedback from the visit.

The Superintendent met with the principal immediately following the visit to provide feedback. The principal was asked to share this information with staff. The feedback included commendations, encouragement and recommendations for improvement. The Superintendent did not evaluate any teacher.
15. A question was raised about the availability of any funding for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

School Board Policy GCL-PC, Professional Staff Development, dictates that "Teachers will be encouraged to seek certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. The School Board will supplement State funds for teachers to obtain the National Board Certification. Upon completion of the National Board Certification, the School Board will pay a one-time supplement in the amount of \$2,000.00." If there are any

questions, staff should contact Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, or Mrs. Janet F. Hancock, Clerk of the Board.

16. The teachers have expressed an interest in becoming more involved in the development of the Madeline Hunter lesson plans.
New classes may require the completion of new lesson plans. A meeting was held with the Pittsylvania Education Association and principals. They were asked to communicate with teachers what is acceptable. During the Superintendent's visit, the expectation was not to review lesson plans. The Superintendent will also discuss this issue with Dr. Lillian Holland to determine expectations.
17. A question was raised about the possibility of empowering teachers to participate in site-based management.
An employee may, after discussing an issue with the principal, contact the appropriate director for continuing discussion should the need arise.
18. A concern was raised about student attendance/ truancy and how they relate to the graduation rate.
The elementary and middle schools are experiencing one of the best years in attendance. The high schools, with the exception of Gretna High School, have experienced a slight decrease in attendance for this year. Truancy is addressed in School Board Policy JED-PC, Student Absences/Excuses/Dismissals. The policy also includes the protocol to follow for students exceeding six (6) absences without parental awareness or support. This may include filing a complaint with the juvenile and domestic relations court alleging the pupil is a child in need of supervision as defined in § 16.1-228 or instituting proceedings against the parent pursuant to § 18.2-371 or § 22.1-262. Any questions concerning truancy should be addressed to Mr. Clarke C. Scott, Director of Middle School Education, by June 30, 2012. Mr. Scott will be retiring effective July 1, 2012.

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

1. A School Wide Autism Training (SWAT) Team began this year with the goal to work with students with autism. The Team consists of parents, speech therapists, psychologists, and teachers with consultative services provided through the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Commonwealth University. An autism needs assessment survey was conducted. It was determined that principals desired to have training in

this area. A training session for administrators and their designees was scheduled on Friday, March 30, 2012.

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

1. There was no new information to share regarding the 2012-2013 school budget. The State has not approved a budget as of this date. It is anticipated that the Senate will approve a budget to include \$55 million more for K-12 education Statewide. The 2012-2013 school budget proposed has been based on the House budget which reflects a \$2.7 million decrease in funding. The original Governor's budget had a \$3.4 million decrease in funding. It is anticipated that a law will pass that will require the employee to pay the 5% employee rate for the Virginia Retirement System (VRS). This will also require the School Board to provide a salary increase of 5% to offset the VRS rate. However, there is a possibility that this requirement will be phased-in over a period of time to ease the cost to the school systems. A 1% raise for employees covered under the VRS would cost the school system \$90,000. The employee may receive a raise but the net pay would decrease slightly, and the School Board would have additional cost because of increases in employer share for life insurance, health care credit, FICA and Social Security. The school budget has been cut \$13 million in the last four (4) years. A representative from the Board of Supervisors had stated that he was opposed to the capital project for the schools because these funds should be used to finance the budget. It was explained that capital project funds were part of the bond referendum and could not be used toward the budget. A question was also raised about the Medicaid billing. The employee that was completing the reimbursement paperwork for Medicaid retired. Upon that retirement, the employee was not replaced, and the funding was used to hire an additional teacher. It was noted that the Medicaid reimbursement amount did not cover the funding for the salary of this individual.

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

1. The federal government requires the school system to limit access to inappropriate material. Because there was override ability, the appropriate material outweighed the inappropriate sites, and therefore, YouTube access was allowed for teachers. However, there were issues with the testing modules not loading properly which was because of the usage from YouTube access. In reviewing the weekly log of access for YouTube, there were 545,000 requests. The school system has only been paying for 60 megabytes but using as much as 84. Continuing this usage would create an increase in funding. There were some individuals abusing and

using the technology inappropriately. Because of this activity, access to YouTube was removed. The Standards of Learning (SOL) tests must be given priority over the use of bandwidth for other sites. If the bandwidth is increased, there will be no e-rate discount for the school system. The representatives were asked to pass this information to colleagues to encourage them to follow a professional code when reviewing information on the internet. Any updates on this situation will be provided to the teachers.

A suggestion was made to inform the individuals who are reviewing inappropriate site to stop or only block YouTube during testing.

Dr. Lillian Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, joined the meeting in progress. She addressed the following items:

1. The High School Course Selection Guide for 2012-2013 includes a career plan that begins at the seventh grade and follows the student through high school. This is an inclusive document for anyone who wants to review the possibilities for diploma options and programs offered by the school system.
2. The Fall 2011 Standards of Learning (SOL) tests results for the high schools were discussed. The decrease in pass rates for math is because of a new test using the 2009 math standards. The school system is doing well in science and chemistry. The social studies scores are increasing. The English standards will change on the assessment next year. Appreciation was expressed to the teachers for all of their hard work and dedication in using the resources available to assist students to be successful. The on-line writing test was a new experience for students this year. It is the desire for teachers to provide students with more opportunities to practice on-line. The new math assessments does require more time. Principals will make adjustments as necessary. As new information regarding assessments is received, it will be distributed to the liaisons to share with teachers to ensure appropriate follow-through.

The Superintendent addressed the following items:

1. There was a concern expressed that teachers did not receive an e-mail regarding the Reduction in Force policy in order to provide them an opportunity to review the information at their leisure.
The School Board approved the first reading of School Board Policy GCPA-R, Reduction in Force Regulations, at its meeting in February. The proposed policy was posted on the website until it final approval by the School Board at its March 12, 2012, meeting. It is hoped that the RIF policy will not be needed for the 2012-2013 school year.

2. A question was raised about elementary students being suspended from school and being allowed to make up work for these unexcused absences. The middle and secondary schools do not have this same opportunity and receive academic penalty for unexcused absences.

A legal opinion was requested which revealed no legal precedence and that the school division was not doing anything wrong but enforcing this policy. The policy will remain in place unless there is a determination for change by the School Board. The middle and secondary students may make up all of their work; however, they do not receive any academic credit. If the principal has indicated that the student must be given credit, this is against School Board policy and should be reported to the Superintendent's Office.

3. Budget information for the 2012-2013 school year was reviewed. This information will also be shared with the Budget Committee and the School Board at the meeting on March 27, 2012. Since July, 2009, there have been 17 classified positions and 87 certified positions cut from the school budget. This represents 7% of the entire staff. Unless the news from the State is worse than anticipated, there is no plan to implement a furlough for employees for 2012-2013. Other considerations for budget cuts include additional PALS funding, family life program, Cortez math program, Title I indirect costs and bus lease. There has been discussion relative to eliminating the opportunity to participate in the Governor's School. At this time, commitments have been made to current rising seniors and would only realize a \$75,000 savings. At this time there are 32 ½ positions that will be cut for the 2012-2013 school year. There are several positions in the Central Office that will not be filled. These include two administrative assistants and the receptionist. The positions may be restructured and employees may be transferred, however, at this time no employees have been laid off or RIFed. Employees may be reassigned based on a request from the intent forms or based on where they live. Most of the schools will be affected by transfers and reassignments. The focus is the continuation of services for the students and meeting their needs.

The Superintendent indicated that the school system will operate under the guidelines of the Standards of Quality. After the 2012-2013 budget is complete, the school system will be set back 25 years with the elimination of programs, employing fewer individuals to do the same jobs and increasing class sizes. This will be a challenge for all employees.

There was no interest to have an additional meeting in May, 2012. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.