

**MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL  
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS  
December 1, 2008**

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, December 1, 2008, 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. 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, Ms. Ann Cassada, Director of Secondary Education, and Mrs. Cathy Scolpini, Lead 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.

**The following Council topics were discussed:**

1. A concern was raised about the on-line prescription service offered through Anthem insurance. The system is not user friendly when using the telephone service.

Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, indicated that he had spoken to several individuals that have used the service, and they have not had any problem. The complaint relative to the on-line prescription service has been forwarded to Anthem.

2. A request was submitted to have regular education teachers trained in dealing with autistic students.

Dr. John W. Amos, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, stated that this issue will be discussed with the special education staff to determine the feasibility of providing more training. The issues that exist include finding individuals with the knowledge of working with autistic children. Mr. Al Klugh, Supervisor of Special Education, is the greatest resource for the school system. There are some parents that do not want their autistic child involved in a special education classroom. It was suggested that the school system provide funding assistance for teachers that may want to participate in the training offered by Averett University.

3. The following concerns were expressed relative to the proposed 2009-2010 school calendar:

- The calendar does not include the ½ day teacher professional day at the end of the grading periods
- Should not offer Memorial Day as a make-up day
- Difference in Governor's School schedule

The Calendar Committee has met. There have been no recommendations relative to continuing the ½ days at the end of the six weeks. There are teacher work days included in the proposed calendar. The Committee is continuing to review comments. All comments should be submitted on-line no later than December 12, 2008. A listing of the members of the Calendar Committee was provided to the Representatives. Any concerns or comments should be submitted on-line or to the Calendar Committee members. It was noted that typically the principals do not schedule staff development for the entire school staff development day. Also, when teachers switch to the Power School program, they will not be able to wait until the end of the six weeks to input grades. The Power School program will allow parents to log into the teacher's grade book to review their child's grades.

The Superintendent provided information relative to using Memorial Day as a priority make-up day. An individual came before the School Board several years back to request Memorial Day remain as a holiday. The Board approved this request until about two years ago. The Board acted on a separate vote to reinstate Memorial Day as a make-up day. The school system has to have viable days to be able to make up any days missed. The School Board sets the calendar and does not want to deviate from the calendar after its approval. The graduation date and priority make-up days are part of the calendar.

The Governor's School schedule is different because there are five (5) different school systems involved in the school. The schedule used is very similar to Patrick County's schedule because they begin school earlier and generally end their school year earlier.

4. A suggestion was presented relative to having the faculty parking area closest to the school at Dan River High School. Currently, the renovation plans have this parking area designated for students.

This is a school issue and should be addressed with the principal at Dan River High School.

5. A request was made to review the sick leave policy to allow teachers retiring to donate unused sick leave days to a co-worker. Also, a request was made to require a person using the sick leave bank to exhaust all sick leave and personal leave before being eligible to use the sick leave bank days. A

question was also asked about any consideration being made to extend the sick leave bank usage for the sickness of a child or spouse.

Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, stated that these requests would require a change in School Board policy. Dr. John Amos will be asked to review these policies to determine the feasibility of any possible changes.

6. A question was raised about exploring other health insurance options for the school division. It was also noted that the State may be opening the opportunity for school divisions to go under the State Health Insurance Plan.

Mr. Donald Johnson indicated that some individuals have dropped the school division plan to obtain a single policy for a child because of the costs. The school system plan covers the young healthy teacher and the other teacher. The best advice for individuals in this situation would be to seek another plan for the children if cost is a factor.

7. A concern was expressed about the seating in the computer lab at Union Hall Elementary School. The seats are falling apart, and there is a safety concern for the students. A question was raised about possible funding for these chairs to be replaced.

Mr. Donald Johnson asked that this issue be discussed with the principal so that a request for replacement of the seating may be submitted to the Central Office.

8. A concern was expressed about the printed 2008-2009 monthly calendar showing a discrepancy in the last day before the Winter Break.

It was noted that the error had been recognized, and a memorandum was sent out the schools to make sure that all staff and parents were aware that December 19, 2008, would be a full school day.

**Mrs. Cathy Scolpini, Lead ITRT, discussed the following items:**

1. It is the goal of the Information Technology Department to install a projector in every classroom. Appreciation was expressed to the teachers for using the projectors, the airliners and the digital microscopes in the classrooms.
2. The Information Technology Department will be highlighting teachers who are using technology. Teachers were encouraged to review these highlights on the homepage when they are posted.
3. The Information Technology Department has compiled a 14-minute video showing how teachers in the school system are using technology in the

classroom. It was noted that the video may be shown at the February meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council.

4. A concern was expressed about the computer labs being unavailable for a whole month during the SOL testing. It was suggested that mobile laptops be made available to allow students the opportunity to complete research for the career and technical classes and to include this in the renovations for the high schools. It was noted that the Information Technology Department is aware of this need; however, it is a funding issue. The renovation plans do include having every other classroom at the high schools equipped with tables and chairs and appropriate outlets for laptops and other necessary equipment.

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

1. The bids have been received for the high school renovations and additions. Blair Construction received the bid for Gretna High School and Chatham High School; J. S. Clark from Mt. Airy, North Carolina, received the bid for Dan River High School and Tunstall High School. The official start date for construction is December 1, 2008. This was a really good time to bid out the renovations which gave the school system prices that were way under budget. The Board of Supervisors has indicated that it will use the additional money to pay down the debt rather than allow the school system to use the money for additional items that may have been cut to save costs. The construction will begin with the building of the additional classrooms and additions to the cafeteria and band room. After the additions are completed, students and staff will be inconvenienced by having to move out of classrooms that will need to be renovated. The construction and renovations should be completed by August or September of 2010. If not completed on time, the construction companies would be charged approximately \$500 per day.

The Superintendent noted that the high school renovations bids did include some add alternates which will allow the high schools to have additional classrooms – Chatham High School will have 16 new classrooms; Dan River High School and Gretna High School will have 12 new classrooms; and Tunstall High School will have 18 new classrooms. All of the modular classrooms at the high schools will be removed. The Board of Supervisors has discussed the money remaining in the bond for the high school renovations. There has also been an agreement that the Board of Supervisors and the School Board will meet together to discuss priorities for the remaining funding before final decisions are made in order to make sure that these decisions will improve the quality of life in the communities.

**Mrs. Ann Cassada, Director of Secondary Education, discussed the following items:**

1. The high school graduation sites have been approved. The graduation ceremonies for Gretna High School will be held on Friday, June 5, 2009, at 7:00 p.m. at the Averett University North Campus, Danville, Virginia. Graduation ceremonies for Chatham High School, Dan River High School and Tunstall High School will be held on Saturday, June 6, 2009, at the Averett University North Campus, Danville, Virginia, at 9:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. respectively.
2. Representatives were encouraged to talk with their Calendar Committee representative regarding any concerns or issues relative to the proposed 2009-2010 school calendar.

**Dr. John W. Amos, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, discussed the following item:**

1. The State has performance standards that must be met for special education. The school system has been selected by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to have an interview team to review information relative to the special education programs and student records for regular and special education students. The interview team will be meeting on February 3-9, 2009. The interview team will include principals, general and special education teachers, some specialized teachers (such as marketing) and VDOE representatives.

**Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, discussed the following item:**

1. The Salary Taskforce met on October 9, 2008, to review requests for the 2009-2010 school budget. The funding forecast for next year is not good at this time. The requests discussed include: increase in the teacher salary scale and decrease in the number of steps to reach the top of the scale, supplement for teachers at the Regional Alternative School, supplement for speech therapists working toward the CCC, reclassification of attendance clerks with a separate salary schedule, travel allowance for school psychologists to attend conferences, increase in substitute pay for custodians and increase in salaries for teacher aides. The next meeting of the Salary Taskforce will be held on December 4, 2008. Representatives were encouraged to provide any input to Mrs. Knight or the Salary Taskforce Representative.

A request was made to include a supplement for teachers obtaining the National Teacher Certification. It was noted that these teachers receive a one-time supplement from the school division and a continuing supplement paid by the Virginia Department of Education.

**The Superintendent discussed the following item:**

1. The possibility of reinventing the senior year was discussed. These discussions began with the Student Leaders Forum in 2006. The students talked about wanting more rigor and relevance in schools. This was the impetus behind the beginning of discussions for the Commonwealth Scholars program, Career Readiness Certificate, First Year Studies Certificate and the Associate Degree program as well as other rigorous programs now being offered to students. Last spring, interviews were conducted with the CEOs and human resources individuals from Goodyear, Sartomer, TelVista and other area companies, to determine what types of skill sets they may look for in potential employees to be successful in the workplace. The representatives of these businesses indicated that there was a need for life and career skills such as being curious, persistence, problem-solving and speaking fluently. A taskforce has been put together to discuss ways to determine how the students can compete globally. This taskforce consists of four (4) teachers (one from each curriculum area), the four (4) student representatives, high school principals, business and community representatives, administrators from the Central Office, a representative from the Career-Tech Center and Danville Community College representatives. Five (5) focus areas have been tentatively agreed upon by the Taskforce. These areas include:
  - Identify 21<sup>st</sup> Century knowledge and skill expectations for college and work readiness;
  - Map out essential coursework designed to facilitate the achievement of specific postsecondary or career goals;
  - Create better implementation of the existing assessments, making use of the results and improving communication so that parents and students can understand the assessments;
  - Strengthen system linkages between high schools and postsecondary education; and,
  - Align curricula among all levels around the 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills that matter for regional and local competitiveness.

These areas may be refined when the taskforce meets again on December 4, 2008.

A concern was raised that that the SOLs and the requirements mandated from the State put the teachers and students in a box which discourages the teachers and the students because of the lack of time to think outside of the SOL box. The teachers need leeway to allow them to be more child-centered and need to have children take more initiative in what they need in the classroom.

The business consensus was to have skills that are not tested on the Standards of Learning. The school system does not want to lose sight of the goals and

are hoping to grow into something bigger and better for the students in the division.

The Representatives were encouraged to contact the Superintendent if they have any comments or thoughts relative to reinventing the senior year.

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

Appreciation was expressed to the Superintendent for listening to their free speech and for the Superintendent's Portal.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:37 p.m. The next meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council will be held on February 2, 2009.