

**MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
February 7, 2011**

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, February 7, 2011, at 2:00 p.m. in the School Administration Office, Chatham, Virginia.

Sixteen (16) 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: Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, and 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. Questions and concerns were raised about the possibility of maintaining jobs and raises for the 2011-2012 school year.

The Budget Committee has met and reviewed the status of the current budget and proposed budget for 2011-2012. The Board has had three (3) goals in looking at the budget: to save jobs, maintain quality instructional programs and ensure the long term viability of the organization. These goals have not changed. The number one priority is to retain existing jobs. The following information was provided concerning the 2011-2012 budget proposal:

- ◆ The proposed Governor's budget indicates an \$800,000 shortfall in revenue for the school system. If the Board of Supervisors does not provide the extra \$600,000 above the required minimum, the shortfall would be \$1.4 million.
- ◆ To provide a 1% raise or bonus to employees, the cost would be \$600,000.
- ◆ There is also a proposal by the Governor that stipulates the employee would pay the 5% contribution to the Virginia Retirement System (VRS); however the employer would be required to give a 3% raise. This is not being recommended to the School Board as an option at this time because if the employee begins paying the 5% contribution, it will be very hard to return that benefit to staff.
- ◆ There is no budget proposal to increase the amount of supplement paid for a Master's Degree.
- ◆ The amount of increase for health insurance is not known at this time. The School Board used carry over funds last year

to buy down the rate increase (5%). The National Health Insurance Act will add a 1.3% increase to health insurance rates resulting in a total increase of 6.3%. There may also be an increase over and above the 6.3% based on the claims for 2010-2011. A \$1,000,000 budget proposal has been included for 2011-2012 for the School Board to provide a 10% increase in health insurance premiums.

- ◆ There have been no final decisions relative to the budget at this time. The budget will be reviewed and approved by the School Board to be presented to the Board of Supervisors by April 1, 2011. The Board of Supervisors must approve the school budget by May 1, 2011.
- ◆ No final figures have been received from the State as of this date.
- ◆ The Senate is proposing the restoration of \$130 per student in State support to local schools. This would be approximately \$900,000 to 1.1 million more in revenue for the school system.
- ◆ The House is proposing an increase in funding for the State's retirement system which would free up some money for the local school divisions.
- ◆ The amount paid by the school divisions for the VRS rate will increase by 2% (approximately \$800,000 for Pittsylvania County Schools).
- ◆ The budget should be finalized in the next two (2) weeks.
- ◆ The State has also passed a physical education bill that will require every K-8 student to have 150 minutes of physical education each week. This is an unfunded mandate to be enacted for the 2014-2015 school year. The 150 minutes would not include the current recess time that is already in the school schedule. It has been suggested that high school students receive the same amount of physical education time.

2. A concern was raised about the differentiated instructional methods and the requirement for teachers to have the same lesson plans. The reason for this was questioned and if it is a school-based, division-based or State-based directive.

The division is in the second year of Differentiated Instruction (D.I.) training and implementation. Through the training, teachers have been exposed to a variety of instructional techniques and approaches which are low prep and create high interest. This year the D.I. training has focused on tiered lessons in which the same content is taught but at different levels based on the student's ability. While there is not a county-adopted lesson plan format, there is an expectation that all teachers will have lesson plans. It is

suggested that grade level teachers work together in their lesson development of tiered lessons to share the work load, but more importantly to exchange ideas and approaches for reaching all students.

3. A concern was expressed about the use of the computer labs during SOL testing at the middle schools for 3-4 students needing small group or read aloud testing. It was asked that consideration be given to installing computers in the special education classroom or providing laptops to allow the special education teachers to serve the needs of the special education population. This would open the labs to be used for larger groups of students.

The issue expressed is a very valid concern, which has been discussed at the division level. Whenever there are funds available, computers will be added to address the small group testing needs of students.

4. A question was raised about the flat screen televisions and the plans for use.

There were issues with the original vendor for the equipment. The system failed, and the vendor was unable to correct the problems. A new vendor has now been selected, and new equipment has been received. Training of the new system for the administrators will be conducted by the end of the summer. It is anticipated that the signage will be working for the 2011-2012 school year.

5. A question was raised about the possibility of dismissing at 11:30 a.m. on one-half days. This schedule would be similar to Danville City Schools.

The Pittsylvania County School System is committed to maintaining the instructional integrity of the school day whether it is a full-day or a one-half day dismissal. There have been reports that some teachers tell the students to stay home on ½ days because they would not be doing anything. If the school day were to end at 11:00 a.m., there may be more parents that would not send their children to school. This would not be the image desired for the school system. The teachers are provided time after the 1:00 p.m. dismissals to complete grades or work in the classroom. The School Board has allowed more 1:00 p.m. dismissals to help the teachers because of the constraints within the calendar.

6. A question was raised about rewards for employees to enhance morale.

One incentive is that employees living outside of Pittsylvania County are provided the opportunity to bring their children into the school system with no tuition costs charged. The Employee of the Week receives a small gift which is purchased by the school system; however, the lunch is provided by the Superintendent with

no charge to the division. Teachers have the opportunity to become a National Board Certified Teacher which would provide additional money from the State. Also, teachers may earn a Master's Degree to increase salary. The school system has limited revenues. If there was a way to offer rewards, the school system would do so.

7. A question was raised about the possibility of increasing the amount of tuition assistance funding that is available.
There are no budget proposals at this time for additional funding for tuition assistance for 2011-2012.
8. A clarification was requested on the Student Growth Model evaluation proposal for teachers which indicates that 40% of the evaluation will come from student improvement.
Because stimulus funds were used to balance the budget, the federal government is requiring the implementation of a student growth model evaluation for teachers that will allow the school division to see data connected to the classroom teachers and school administrators. Evaluation instruments, which will include a student performance component, will be developed by the fall of 2011. Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, and Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, will attend a conference in March to receive additional information about the evaluation instrument. Further information will be provided as soon as received.
9. A rumor has begun circulating that there will be a retirement incentive for this year that will be better than last year.
Currently there is no retirement incentive being discussed for the 2010-2011 retirees.
10. A question was raised about the possibility of resource teachers being restored to full-time status at one school when the Federal Jobs money is received.
The Standards of Quality dictate the number of staff (such as librarians, physical education teachers, music teachers, guidance counselors, principals and assistant principals) needed based on the number of students at the school. Under the Standards of Quality, Union Hall Elementary, Chatham Elementary, Mt. Airy Elementary and Hurt Elementary Schools are not required to have a full-time administrator. The Standards also indicate that a school must have 600 students to have a part-time assistant principal. There were several administrative and administrative assistants' contracts which were restructured to 11 months in order to

maintain jobs for 2010-2011. The Federal Jobs money is one-time funding.

11. A concern was raised about writing IEPs for students who are no longer enrolled in the school (such as private day placements).
If a student has been placed in private day schools, the special education teacher at the school is not responsible for writing the IEP. Dr. Jeff Early will discuss this with the appropriate individuals.
12. Continuing concerns were expressed about the middle school expo classes. The teachers are tutoring 10% of the students at the expense of the other 90%. There is a concern about the students receiving what is needed for the Standards of Learning.

The school division must provide in-school remediation in addition to any after-school remediation that is offered. In order to meet this need, the middle school schedule was adjusted this year to include a remediation period; i.e., expo. Teachers were provided with an explanation of how this time would be used prior to the beginning of the school year. In addition to remediation, extension/enrichment activities along with special lessons were scheduled (DARE, Family Life, character education). Mr. Clarke Scott responded that “I must take exception of the percentages presented with this concern. I believe these are out of line. Based upon my observations, those of our instructional team and results of 9- and 18-week assessments, schools are not showing a 90% pass rate. It is my opinion that the percentages could be reversed. Based on the results, it would seem that a majority of students would benefit from remediation and possibly 10% needing extension/enrichment.”

Certainly at this time of year, 100% of the students would benefit from review, reinforcement, and remediation as we get closer to the SOL assessments.

Mr. Scott indicated that “I will again direct principals to present the purpose of the remediation period and monitor implementation.”

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

1. The Information Technology staff will begin the installation of projectors and screens in the K-2 classrooms. The projectors are in stock and will be installed as quickly as possible to complete the two-year phase-in project to have projectors in all classrooms.

2. The Information Technology staff is working on the upgrade of the infrastructure at the elementary schools to bring them up to the same standard as the middle and high schools. The schools may experience some limited disruptions during this process.

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

1. The December Special Education Enrollment report was provided. The school system is required annually to provide the number of students in Pittsylvania County Schools that receive services to the State Department of Education. These figures drive the funding received for special education. The percentage of students receiving services dropped from 15.2% for 2009-2010 to 14.6% for 2010-2011. A breakdown by grade and primary disability was provided.
2. The school system has been working with the health department to provide free Tdap clinics for rising sixth graders. Letters regarding the clinics will be provided to all fifth grade students in the division.
3. The Virginia Department of Education has conducted a visit to review all of the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for the school division. These records were found to be complete and accurate. The Department also reviewed records and interviewed individuals at two of the middle schools, two of the high schools and four of the elementary schools. A full report is forthcoming with recommendations and commendations.

The Superintendent addressed the following items:

1. The 2011-2012 school calendar has been approved by the School Board. It was noted that teachers would have the opportunity to select their work schedule on August 11 and 12, 2011. These opportunities include:
 - a. working the entire day to include the open house on August 11, 2011, and work ½ day on August 12, 2011; or
 - b. working two full days (6 hours per day) on August 11 and August 12, 2011.The School Board has also provided the Superintendent the flexibility to use banked days during the fall semester for inclement weather make-up as needed.
2. The recruitment schedule for the Human Resources Office for 2010-2011 was provided.

3. The anticipated vacancies for the 2011-2012 school year were provided. Currently, there are 21 individuals who have indicated they will retire or resign at the end of the 2010-2011 school year.
4. An explanation was provided relative to a recent inclement weather situation. The decision had been made the previous night to have a two-hour delay for schools; however, the next morning there was black ice and hazardous road conditions. Therefore, the decision was made to close schools. In trying to launch an AlertNOW message, it was discovered that the system was not working properly. The Superintendent contacted Mr. Jim Davis with Emergency 911 and requested that a reverse 911 message be launched. This message was sent to everyone in the Pittsylvania County 911 system. After this message was received, the AlertNOW system was back in operation and another message was launched. The Superintendent assured individuals that the AlertNOW system is now working appropriately and steps have been taken to ensure that this situation would not occur in the future.
5. A presentation on the budget status was provided. Individuals will have the opportunity to submit comments and suggestions through this website: <http://www.pcs.k12.va.us/survey/>
6. The following budget questions/concerns were expressed by the Representatives:
 - a. Appreciation was expressed to the Superintendent for providing this information to the teachers and staff.
 - b. Why are surrounding school divisions supported above the requirement and Pittsylvania County is not?

This is a challenge for the school system. Other school systems are provided funding above the required effort to support schools. The Board of Supervisors has a proven track record to fund only the minimum required by the State. Individuals need to talk with their Board of Supervisors representative. When electing officials, voters should seek individuals who understand and show concern for education.
 - c. Will there be a prioritized listing of budget cuts for 2011-2012?

The staff will be reviewing the budget and begin to generate ideas for cuts. The school system has been cut by \$8.5 million over the last two years. This year, the cuts may be \$800,000 to \$2 million. Information will be provided as soon as it is available.
 - d. Does the funding for transportation include field trips?

The transportation budget includes fuel costs and utilities. The utilities for the high schools will probably increase because of the additional space from the renovations.

- e. Have there been any thoughts about closing the smaller schools?
There are no thoughts to close any schools. Pittsylvania County is such a large county, and the schools are very unique to each community. Busing students to another school may increase travel time which would not be productive for the students.

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

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m.