

**MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
February 2, 2009**

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, February 2, 2009, 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. John W. Amos, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology and Mrs. Cathy Scolpini, Lead ITRT. ABSENT: Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, and Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources.

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

The following Council topics were discussed:

1. A concern was expressed about the continuation of the ERIP program. It was noted that teachers (and employees) should be notified at least a year in advance if the ERIP plan was going to be terminated.

School Board Policy, GBO-PC, Retirement System, states that the School Board reserves the right to amend or terminate the program when it appears it is in the best interest of the Board to do so. The policy further states that participants already in the program would not be affected by the amendment or termination of the program. The ERIP program is a benefit to the school system and is very different from programs offered by surrounding school divisions. The ERIP program has not been recommended to be placed on the table for discussion as a cut for the 2009-2010 budget. However, it is not known if the Budget Committee or the School Board may determine that this item may need to be considered. If there were to be a decrease in salaries for 2009-2010, this would impact individuals desiring to retire under ERIP at the end of that school year. ERIP is based on 20% of the final salary which could be a reduction for 2009-2010.

There is an early out retirement proposal being discussed in the General Assembly. This enhanced retirement incentive plan would allow a school system to purchase additional years of service for individuals 50 years old with at least 25 years of service. This would be a cost to the school system and would not be feasible for Pittsylvania County Schools. This proposal is only being offered as a one time opportunity July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010.

2. A concern was expressed about the computers at the Regional Alternative School. The computers are shutting down, overheating and parts may not be available for repairs. The system used at the Alternative School is computer-based.

It was noted that the computer repair and replacement funding would not be affected by any budget cuts. The principal should be contacted and asked to submit a work order as repairs are needed.

3. A question was raised about the deadline date for individuals to be made aware of any potential layoffs.

Any affected employees would be notified prior to April 15.

4. A concern was expressed about budget cuts for individuals receiving degree supplements.

There are no recommendations to decrease any supplements for graduate study supplements.

5. A concern was expressed about the schedule of classes on days when there is a two-hour delay for schools. It was noted that Tunstall High School decreases the time in the first and second periods only. The request was to have a county-wide schedule in order to provide equity among the classes.

The principals have the autonomy to change the schedule. This issue should be discussed during school improvement meetings at the schools.

Three of the four high schools are consistent on the shortening of the first two blocks on delayed school opening days. Chatham High School divides the time between the four blocks and delays lunch until 12:30 p.m. Mrs. Rhonda Yates will check with the cafeteria managers to see if the other three schools could delay lunch schedules without an overtime issue and accommodate Career-Tech Center afternoon students getting lunch prior to leaving their home school.

6. A request was made to allow the donation of sick leave days to other individuals within the school division.

The staff has begun to review this possibility. Procedures from other divisions have been reviewed and discussions have been held with the Virginia School Boards Association attorney. The attorney has concerns relative to the concept of a sick leave bank and how this donation of days may affect the bank. If any changes are made, it must be at the beginning of a school year. The Superintendent noted that if he gave away his sick

leave days, he would not feel that he would be eligible for the sick leave bank if needed. Staff members are continuing to study this issue.

7. It was stated that the Governor's budget was not supposed to decrease teaching positions and salaries and was only to affect Central Office personnel.

The Superintendent explained that the Governor's budget cuts included administrative support personnel. Currently, the school system has 272 administrative support positions. The Governor's budget would cut 100 of these positions. However, if these positions would be cut from the budget, it would mean everyone's position would be open. The last person hired would be the first to be let go.

8. A suggestion was made to have an on-line staff directory showing names and titles.

A directory has been set up on the website. Please review the directory at this site:

<http://www.pcs.k12.va.us/teacher/directory/>

9. The following questions/concerns were expressed about the 2009-2010 budget considerations:
 - a. A question was raised about the need for six (6) assistant superintendents for the school system.

It was noted that the school system only has five (5) assistant superintendents. All school divisions across the State have individuals who work with information technology, instruction, business, human resources and support services. These individuals may be assistant superintendents or directors. These individuals are dependable and deserve some respectability. Someone has to do the work. The Standards of Quality indicates that Pittsylvania County Schools can have 1.22 assistant superintendents. The SOQ also does not provide enough funding for assistant principals, librarians, teachers and counselors. However, the Superintendent does not want to cut these positions. They all perform a valuable service to the school system.

If the Stimulus package that is being proposed by President Obama is approved, it will lessen the impact of the budget cuts. However, at this time, it is not known what our budget figures will be for 2009-2010. The Budget Committee and the School Board will be reviewing the budget figures.

- b. A question was raised about the possibilities for employment if the budget is not approved by April 15.

The names of all teachers and administrators will be presented to the School Board at its April 9, 2009, meeting. At that time, the Board would approve the listing which guarantees individuals a job contingent upon the availability of funding. If more money becomes available from State or federal monies, the School Board would have to determine the best choice for funding, such as salary, benefits, insurance or operational costs.

- c. A concern was expressed about requesting to retire at this time and then desiring to rescind the request if funding issues change.

The requests for retirement are presented to the Board individually; however, the Board has allowed individuals to rescind their requests in the past.

There will be positions that will have to be filled for 2009-2010 in order to accommodate the needs of the students.

- d. A request was made to post every employee's salary for the last five (5) years.

The news media generally posts this information. The school system has not posted this information.

- e. It was noted that Lynchburg City Schools was looking at different percentages of cuts for classifications (such as 5% for administrators/3% for teachers/2% for classified). It was also suggested that the Board just take back last year's pay raise.

The School Board may consider some different budget cuts; however, there have been no determinations made relative how or if a pay decrease will be implemented nor any discussions relative to pay steps.

The goals in the budget discussions have been to try to minimize the impact on classroom instruction and not to have people lose their jobs.

- f. A question was raised about the possibility of implementing a reduction in force.

If the School Board were to implement a reduction in force, regulations would have to be approved. Under reduction in force, an employee whose job is taken away may pull someone else's job if qualified. Seniority is high on the list.

The Budget Committee and School Board will hold the following meetings which will provide opportunities for individuals to make

comments relative to the budget: February 10 (School Board); March 5 (Budget Committee); March 10 (School Board); and March 24 (Public Hearing/School Board). The School Board will vote on the 2009-2010 budget on March 24, 2009. A budget must be presented to the Board of Supervisors by April 1. It is anticipated that the school system would know at that time what the General Assembly will approve for budget funding.

- g. A request was made to allow individuals to submit responses to the budget items being considered by the School Board.

A link will be available on the website for individuals to submit on-line responses.

- h. A question was raised about keeping the newly created positions in the Central Office and not replacing teachers in the classroom.

The newest position at the Central Office was created because there was no curriculum direction for the fine arts and JROTC programs. Also, there was money in the budget for the employment of another truancy officer. Therefore, part of the position that was created was truancy. The goal this year is not to cut anyone's job. If individuals decide to retire, the staff may look at combining jobs.

- i. A question was raised about the need for employees to have School Board owned vehicles.

Currently, there are individuals who have School Board owned vehicles that must have these for emergency situations that may arise. There are several cars at the School Board Office that are used on an as-needed basis. Most assistant superintendents, bus shop, information technology and maintenance employees have vehicles they drive home because of the nature of their work. However, the use of these vehicles is currently on the table for discussion and consideration. Individuals driving School Board owned vehicles must pay taxes on the use of these company vehicles.

- j. A concern was expressed about discontinuing the lead teacher supplement but allowing the continuation of the lead director supplement.

The supplement for lead director has been provided since 1998 because of the nature of the responsibilities. Lead directors receive a \$2,000.00 supplement; lead teachers receive a \$800.00 supplement. It is felt that lead teachers are well compensated for the work they are required to complete.

- k. A question was raised about the cuts to the gifted program. It was noted that these students will be the next doctors and lawyers.

The recommendation in the budget considerations is not to fill the position of a retiring gifted resource teacher. It is felt that the services can be provided to the gifted students using the remaining staff.

- 10. A request was made to announce school closings or delays earlier. A question was also raised about having to close all schools when there is bad weather in only one area of the County.

Currently, the decisions relative to school closings or delays are made between 5:30 - 6:00 a.m. The consensus of the group was to continue the process as currently in place.

Most school systems choose to close all schools. Certain schools may be closed; however, it creates an issue in trying to determine make up days. The Superintendent and staff have not given a lot of consideration to closing just one school. There may be employees travelling from other areas of County or surrounding areas to work. Safety is also the first and foremost factor in making any decisions relative to the closing or delay of schools.

- 11. A concern was expressed about the repeats in the lunch menus, especially soup. Soup is messy in the elementary schools, and most of the students do not like it. It was suggested that students be allowed to provide lunch suggestions.

The school system currently uses cycle menus which are recommended by the Virginia Department of Education. The cycle menus help the school system to ensure that the USDA meal pattern guidelines are met. Cycle menus are also more economical and help to facilitate a safer planned menu for students with special needs. There have been no complaints received from the cafeteria employees relative to soup being disliked by the students or causing any type of inconvenience to the cafeteria or custodial staff. In fact, soup has been reported as a favorite meal for elementary students. Soup is also very nutritious for students and allows for important nutrient consumption. Students are always encouraged to provide lunch suggestions. Suggestions may be provided directly to the cafeteria manager or the School Nutrition Program department. Currently, students have the opportunity to plan the menu once a year; however, for the 2009-2010 school year, students will be provided three (3) opportunities.

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

1. The Statistical Profile brochure for Pittsylvania County Schools was distributed. This brochure includes the following information: accreditation ratings, a listing of schools achieving full accreditation (all of our schools are fully accredited), Standards of Learning, Scholastic Aptitude test results, Stanford 9/10 results, report of dropouts and graduation rates, completion rate for ninth grade students entering high school, textbook adoption schedule, September 30 membership and the number of students receiving free and reduced lunches.
2. A copy of the 2009-2010 school calendar was provided. This calendar has been approved by the School Board.
3. To date, 960 students have been awarded the distinction of Graduate of Merit. Currently, there are 159 candidates for the Graduate of Merit award for the 2009 graduation. Information relative to available scholarships was provided. A recognition banquet will be held on May 21, 2009, at the Averett Convocation Center North Campus, Danville, Virginia.
4. The preliminary Fall 2008 SOL results were distributed. The revised scores are provided below. The passing rates for the high schools were as follows:
 - a. Math – 86-97% with division average of 87%
 - b. Science – 85-96% with division average of 91%
 - c. Social Studies – 85-95% with division average of 91%
 - d. English – 89-97% with division average of 93%
5. Information relative to the division wide assessments was provided. There is a recommendation in the budget considerations to cut the division-wide assessment and the Tests for Higher Standards. It was noted that there may not be much correlation between the Tests for Higher Standards and the SOL tests for high school mathematics. If the decision is to cut these assessments, teachers would need to destroy all assessments as they relate to the Tests for Higher Standards.

It was noted that these tests have been very helpful with the VGLA. Special education teachers should be notified if these cuts are made so that adjustments may be made for the VGLA.

Dr. Holland asked that additional responses relative to potential cuts be provided to her or to the level directors.

In the absence of Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, the Superintendent discussed the following items:

1. A list of budget considerations as discussed by the administrative staff was provided. This information has been reviewed by the Budget Committee. The following additional item was added by a School Board member: eliminate non-PCS use of school buildings after 4:30 p.m. This information will be placed on the website to allow individuals the opportunity to respond with comments or suggestions.
2. The high school renovations are continuing and are on schedule. The bond referendum was passed by the voters, and this funding cannot be used for anything other than the high school renovations and additions.
3. The AlertNOW system appears to be working very well. If there are any questions or problems, please contact the Central Office.

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

1. The December 1, 2008, child count for special education was provided. There are 1,381 students classified with a disability. This represents 15% of the total student population in Pittsylvania County Schools. A breakdown by special education categories was also provided. It was noted that autism and other health impaired numbers are continuing to increase.
2. A Behavior Management Taskforce is being formed to review the Student Conduct Policy. A copy of the policy was provided, and teachers were asked to review and make suggestions for changes to Dr. John Amos.
3. An on-site special education program monitoring will be conducted by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) beginning February 3, 2009. The representatives from the VDOE will review records, interview special and regular education teachers, and conduct tours. They will be visiting Gretna Elementary School, Kentuck Elementary School, Dan River Middle School, Tunstall Middle School and Chatham High School to ensure that the school system is meeting all standards set by the VDOE for special education.

Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology, and Mrs. Cathy Scolpini, Lead ITRT, discussed the following item:

1. A short video relative to the new PowerSchool program was presented. Because State reporting will no longer be done in SASI, school divisions were required to select a new student information system that met State criteria. Due to cost, Pittsylvania County Schools chose PowerSchool. PowerSchool will replace SASI, and its teacher grade book product, PowerTeacher, will replace Integrate Pro. The goal is to increase efficiency with technology. This program would also allow parents to login and review information

relative to their child. Training for teachers will be provided for the program during the work days at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year.

A question was raised about losing Blackboard.

This is a budget consideration; however, there is an open source program called Moodle that would be available to replace Blackboard if it is cut from the budget.

The Superintendent discussed the following items:

1. Budget information will be placed on the internet for comments. The suggestions and comments submitted will be provided to the Budget Committee as deemed appropriate.

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 4:04 p.m. The next meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council will be held on March 30, 2009.