

**MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
December 3, 2007**

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, December 3, 2007, at 2:00 p.m. in the School Administration Office, Chatham, Virginia.

Nineteen (19) 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. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology, and Mrs. Cathlene Scolpini, Lead Instructional Technology Resource Teacher (ITRT).

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

The following Council topics were discussed:

1. A concern was expressed about cleaning and disinfecting schools relative to MRSA. Specifically, the concern was about the safety of the product being used, the possible need for additional instructions, goggles and ventilation and if teachers are directed to use this product as part of their daily duties.

Bottles of disinfectant were purchased because teachers were complaining about not having anything in the classroom to address the MRSA issue. It was not the intention of the school system to require teachers to disinfect their classrooms. Principals may have interpreted this incorrectly. This issue will be discussed with the principals at the December meeting. MSDA sheets were carefully researched before purchasing the disinfectant. The MSDA sheet for this product does state that proper ventilation and goggles may be necessary; however, Lysol spray also contains this same wording. Gloves were also purchased for teachers that may have a reaction to the disinfectant.

It was noted that black widow spiders have been found in three (3) different classrooms at Chatham Middle School.

For the weekend disinfecting of the entire school, teachers have been asked to remove papers from their desks because there is a fine mist that is sprayed in the classrooms. There is an electro-statically charged machine that is used which envelopes the area with this fine mist. Individuals are wearing respirators while spraying this disinfectant; however, after a 15-

minute period, the mist is gone. There was one concern expressed about the strong smell from the disinfectant.

These issues will be clarified with the principals at the December meeting.

2. A definition was requested for immediate family as it relates to sick leave.
The definition for immediate family is defined by the State. A copy of the State's definition of immediate family was provided.
3. A request was made to define guidance counselors as teachers on the inclement weather guidelines.
The school system uses the State's definition of teachers which includes teachers, guidance counselors, librarians and JROTC instructors. Any questions relative to this should be directed to the principal.
4. A question was raised about the delayed schedules for staff members on snow days.
When schools are delayed two hours, it is believed that staff may come to work; however, the delay provides time to ensure that the roads are safe for buses to travel. It is important for administrators and staff members (particularly secretaries and custodians) to come to work to answer the phones, put salt on the sidewalks (if necessary) and complete other pertinent duties. The school system does have a plan in place for staff to report at 10:00 a.m. if schools are closed. If an employee determines not to come to work, they may use their accumulated leave.
5. A question was raised about the final evaluation instrument and why teachers are being marked as needs improvement under making a habit of arriving late or leaving early based on the number of days absent during the year. Teachers feel that they should not receive a needs improvement for maternity leave or other leaves of that nature.

The evaluation document will be reviewed more closely with the principals at the December meeting to determine a more appropriate place to note excessive absences. There may be a new category added to address this for next year. There is not much that can be noted if an employee does not miss more than the number of days that the School Board provides. Teachers receive ten (10) days of sick leave and three (3) days of personal leave each year.
6. Concern was expressed about the appearance of the concrete sidewalks at Gretna Middle School.
Pictures have been received of the cracking concrete sidewalks. This information has been provided to the maintenance department for review and possible repair.

7. A question was raised about the possibility of having a board posted in the buildings showing a picture, list of names and area of responsibility of individuals in the schools and School Board Office.

The administration has tried to address this by the wearing of name badges. This is a safety issue. If there is an individual in the school building without a name badge, they are in the building without permission. The expectation is that all staff members are to wear the name badges at all times while they are in the school buildings.

8. A request was made to move from a six-week grading period to a nine-week grading period. This request was made by Twin Springs Elementary School.

This recommendation should be provided to the representative for the Grading and Reporting Committee to be discussed at the next appropriate meeting. Feedback would need to be received from principals and staff members. Dr. Lillian Holland chairs the Grading and Reporting Committee which also includes a representative from the School Board. This issue has been discussed in the past. The school system followed a nine-week grading period at one time; however, the teachers felt that they were not getting the support of the parents so the system returned to the six-week grading period. Any questions or topics for discussion by the Grading and Reporting Committee should be provided to Dr. Lillian Holland.

9. Concern was expressed about the cut off time for electronic report cards. The elementary teachers did not feel they had enough time to complete the report cards. Elementary teachers do not have as much planning time as the high school teachers. The issue of concern was relative to putting in the comments. It was stated that there was no communication provided to the teachers about when the report cards would be printed. Teachers need to be reminded that they have to put in all of the required information for the report cards.

The principals set these dates. There is only a one-week period, and the principals wanted two complete days to print the report cards. There was a problem that occurred after the import of the grades because the first six weeks grades were brought in rather than the second six weeks. The teacher has the entire marking period to put in the grades. Teachers should be encouraged to put the grades in the system throughout the grading period.

There appears to be some procedural issues and some communication issues that may need to be resolved. Information regarding the dates for the completion and printing of report cards was communicated through e-mail. Teachers should be encouraged to check e-mail daily.

10. A question was raised about the policy and liability issues relative to a teacher transporting a student who is the child of another teacher.

The name of the other teacher would need to be listed on the emergency form. There is always liability in transporting anyone else if the individual is negligible.

11. A question was raised about students traveling home with parents rather than riding the bus on field trips.

The principal may make this determination. There should be written permission prior to the field trip. These requirements are the same for athletics trips. One school indicated that the parent must provide a signed form and hand it to the teacher in person before the student is allowed to ride with the parent.

12. A question was raised about Title I funds being cut for tutoring.

The Title I allocation for Pittsylvania County Schools was \$73,000.00 less than last year. Much of the Title I funding is used for teacher salaries.

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

1. The Salary Taskforce met on October 11, 2007. The Taskforce will meet again on December 4, 2007. The budget items that have been discussed include: retirement benefits for bus drivers, increase of salary steps for nurses, reclassification of teacher aides and increase in salary for teacher aides. Representatives were asked to provide any additional items for consideration. The Salary Taskforce recommendations for the 2008-2009 budget proposal will be presented to the School Board at its December 11, 2007, meeting.

Ms. Cathlene Scolpini, Lead ITRT, addressed the following items in Mr. Parker's absence:

1. Blackboard had been funded by a grant; however, the program no longer meets the criteria for grant funding. Therefore, Blackboard is being funded through local technology money. With the cut in funding, consideration was being made to discontinue Blackboard. However, the administration worked together to find the necessary funding to continue the program for the 2007-2008 school year and will request continuing funding in the 2008-2009 budget initiatives.
2. Personal music files are taking up too much space on the server. Teachers were provided a limited amount of time to remove these programs from the server. Having these types of music files is a violation of copyright laws and the Acceptable Use Policy.
3. To assure that students do not gain access to the Student Information System (SASI), teachers have been asked to pay more attention and ensure that the students login with the correct workstation number. Teachers should not allow

students to use the teacher workstation. Technicians should be asked to create a special login for the accelerated reader program.

4. The school division is responsible for the violations that the employees make in the area of copyright; therefore, copyright law training will be provided to the teachers.

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

1. The 2008 graduation will be held on June 7, 2008. The sites have been selected as follows:
 - a) Chatham High School High and Dan River High School will be held at the Averett Convocation Center in Danville, Virginia
 - b) Gretna High School will be held at Gretna High School
 - c) Tunstall High School will be held at Tunstall High School
2. The State requires the school system to implement a plan for incorporating internet safety into instruction for the 2008-2009 school year. In order for teachers to incorporate this training for better instruction they also need to have training for internet safety. Beginning in the Spring of 2008, teachers will be required to complete an on-line training for the i-Safe program which includes videos for teachers to watch. The ITRTs will schedule a 15-minute presentation at each school's faculty meeting and will also share information on internet safety. Recertification points will be offered for individuals completing the on-line training.
3. The proposed 2008-2009 school calendar draft was discussed. Feedback has been received and will be discussed by the Calendar Committee at its next meeting. The following concerns were expressed by the Representatives:
 - December 22 as the first priority make up day – it was felt that this would be a poor attendance day
 - Use January 16 as a priority make-up day with a 1:00 p.m. dismissal (move up in the priority listing)
 - Issues to consider relative to calendar dates: November 4, 2008, is not being used as a priority make-up day because of the Presidential Election; the School Board will not agree to having school days after the graduation date; the State requires a school system to make up the first five (5) days missed; and no one likes extended days or having school on Saturday
 - A question was raised about having December 19 as a 1:00 p.m. dismissal; however, the schools will be closed for a full two (2) weeks
 - Use January 16 and January 20 as priority make-up days
 - It was suggested to open the school year prior to August 25 (possibly August 20)
 - A question was raised about having to have graduation on the first Saturday in June. Graduation is set on a Saturday following the

appropriate number of school days. When the calendar is approved by the School Board, the graduation date is also set and cannot be changed. This also helps the schools and parents with scheduling issues.

These suggestions will be considered by the Calendar Committee. The School Board will vote on the 2008-2009 school calendar at its January, 2008, meeting.

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

1. A copy of the Request for Approval of Excused Absence for Educational Opportunity form was provided and discussed. There was a concern expressed about students taking educational trips and the need to convey the importance of attendance at school. The parent will be required to complete the form and include specifics on how and when the student will make up the work missed.

The following changes to the form were suggested:

- Add a statement to the bottom of the form to indicate that a copy has been provided to the classroom teacher
- Asked that instruction be added as part of the make-up work expected so that the parent will realize that classroom instruction will also be missed.

A question was raised about the possibility of a form for teachers to complete should they wish to take an educational trip. Teachers have personal leave that may be used for these types of activities.

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

1. Within the next two to three weeks, the school system will have \$10 million of the \$70 million from the recently approved high school bond referendum. These funds will allow the school system to hire an architectural firm to begin the plans for the renovations which will take approximately 6-8 months. Construction should begin in late summer or early fall. The renovations should be completed in approximately 2½ years. It is assumed that the additions will be built first so that there would be space to move the students during the renovations.
2. All faculty and staff names and contact telephone numbers have been added to the AlertNOW system. Employees should contact the Central Office if an AlertNOW call is made and they did not receive the call. The names are categorized in order to allow the school system to call specific groups (such as calling bus drivers when school is closing early). It takes approximately 30-45 minutes to complete an AlertNOW call to all employees and students.

The Superintendent addressed the following item:

1. Appreciation was expressed to the teachers, families and friends for the support shown for the Phase IV High School Renovation Bond Referendum. The vote was phenomenal with 64% voting for the bond referendum. The votes for the previous bond referendums were less (elementary schools bond referendum was 51% voting for the bond; middle schools bond referendum was 56% voting for the bond). People in the communities are impressed by what the school system and the staff are doing. Renan was the only precinct in the entire County that did not carry the vote for the bond referendum, and it failed to pass by only 14 votes. This speaks volumes that people are supportive of education in Pittsylvania County.

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 3:56 p.m.