

**MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
February 22, 2010**

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, February 22, 2010, at 2:00 p.m. in the School Administration Office, Chatham, Virginia.

Eighteen (18) representatives were present. Also present were Mr. James E. McDaniel, Division Superintendent, Dr. Jeffrey B. Early, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, Dr. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, 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.

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

The following Council topics were discussed:

1. A question was raised about the possibility of having one additional day at the end of the six weeks for teachers to enter grades on PowerSchool.
After the previous discussion by the Teachers' Advisory Council, the number of days required for teachers to enter grades on PowerSchool was discussed by the principals. As requested by the Council, an additional day was added to allow the teachers sufficient time to enter grades. The principals felt that this was adequate time.
2. Questions were raised about allowing advanced placement (AP) teachers to develop a syllabus rather than following the school system's curriculum guide, and if AP students could be exempted from final exams.
The teachers do have to follow the AP syllabi. The school system may have to review the curriculum guide to ensure these are consistent. School Board policy does not include the exemption of AP students from final exams. Current policy allows for exemption for end of course exams, and any modification to this would require a change in policy.
3. It was noted that the Board of Supervisors is willing to fund the Sheriff's Office salaries rather than following the State's cuts in the budget.
The Superintendent attended the Board of Supervisors Finance Committee meeting to request funding for the high school revitalization plans. The Board of Supervisors is not willing to provide any funding from the bond money to help with these plans. The Board of Supervisors is only interested in funding the schools at the minimum amount required by the State. This means they only fund the Standards of Quality which indicate that a third grade class can have 25 students and a fourth grade can have

35 students in each. Under the Standards of Quality, Twin Springs Elementary School is the only elementary school that qualifies for a ½ time assistant principal, and one principal could share Hurt Elementary and Mt. Airy Elementary Schools. The school system funds the difference for other positions not required by the Standards of Quality. The Board of Supervisors has cut the school system's budget over \$2.2 million over the last two (2) years. There has been a school or community representative at each of the Board of Supervisors meetings since August to try to convince the Board to provide funding.

4. A question was raised about any county-wide policies that would require teachers to stand outside for bus duty when it is 20 degrees or below.
There is no School Board policy relative to bus duty. This requirement would be a school decision.
5. A question was asked about the rationale for not providing tables in the multi-purpose rooms at the high schools.
The additional tables were not provided because of space issues. There is very little room, and space must be provided for aisles and appropriate clearance in the classroom.
6. A question was raised about the fate of the Regional Alternative School.
No final decisions have been made relative to the Regional Alternative School at this time. There is a great deal of passion from the School Board to ensure that the Regional Alternative School is a viable option for students. The Danville City Schools is pulling out of the Regional Alternative School. The school system will have to come up with the additional money (\$160,000 from State funds and \$85,000.00 for Danville's local match). The Regional Alternative School can become a valuable tool for an academic school. There are overage students at the middle schools that could be helped in a setting of this nature.
7. A concern was expressed about the Information Technology staff interrupting classroom instruction time to complete work. It was suggested that the staff set up appointments to complete the work orders rather than interrupting the classes.
Some teachers welcome the interruptions so that the work may be completed. The IT staff does not want to interrupt the classes. It was noted that at some schools, the IT staff has knocked on the door and asked if the time was convenient for the teacher. Teachers were asked to contact Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology, to inform him of any specific situation so that it may be addressed appropriately.
8. A suggestion was made to bring teachers together to evaluate textbooks for adoption rather than individual schools separately evaluating them.

These suggestions need to be shared with Mr. Clarke C. Scott, Director of Middle School Education. Textbooks are being reviewed for social studies.

9. A question was raised about the percentage of parents using the Parent Portal. There have been over 3,000 hits over a two day period. An issue has developed, and the Parent Portal is currently not available. IT staff is working to resolve this problem. The parents are providing the passwords to the students to allow them to login and review their grades. Parents have been very appreciative of the Parent Portal.
10. A question was raised about the savings that could be realized with a four-day school week.

The school system saved approximately \$30,000.00 during the summer of 2009 by working a four-day work week. This savings was in the amount of gasoline saved by not driving the School Board vehicles to work on Fridays and the amount of electricity saved. The State of Virginia does allow school divisions to operate a four-day school week. The concern for Pittsylvania County Schools is how well students and teachers will function when instruction begins at 8:00 a.m. and concludes at 4:00 p.m. Buses would have to begin picking up students as early as 6:15 a.m. Child care would be an issue. Also, decisions for school closings and delays would have to be made much earlier. The most savings for a four-day school week would be operational. However, salaries for bus drivers, custodians and cafeteria workers would be decreased by 20% because the requirement for work would be less. The four-day school week does have merit. The process to begin a four-day school week would need to begin in the fall to start building relationships with parents to provide information and get them on board.
11. A question was raised about when the drug dogs will return to the schools. The school system has an agreement with the Sheriff's Office to bring in the drug dogs. However, at the Sheriff's Office request, neither the Superintendent's office nor the principals know when the dogs will be brought into the school. The school may also request the dogs if situations arise that may make the use of the dogs necessary.
12. It was suggested that the Employee of the Week picture be placed on the homepage.

The Employee of the Week is currently featured under Breaking News and on the Text page. The homepage has been revised to make it more efficient.
13. A request was made to extend the deadline for submission of retirement papers until after the budget has been determined.

School Board policy dictates the deadline for the Early Retirement Incentive Program (ERIP) is March 1 of each school year. The Superintendent indicated that he felt confident that the School Board would work with individuals who may need to exceed this deadline. The School Board would review these situations on a case by case basis.

14. A concern was expressed about School Board members making comments that a teacher felt was inappropriate. Specifically, these comments concerned pay cuts, the teachers having to pay their own retirement and cutting ERIP. The Superintendent indicated that School Board members are elected officials and only have authority when members are seated as a corporate body. The comments that have been made by the School Board member were shared with the Chairman of the School Board. It was noted that ERIP has never been placed on the list of considerations for cuts for the 2010-2011 school budget.
15. It was suggested that any updates relative to the budget for 2010-2011 be posted.
16. Concern was expressed about the PD360 program and what was required of teachers to complete. It was also noted that the PD360 program is sometimes not accessible.

PD360 is a resource for professional development that principals may use based on the needs of the schools. The principal may choose areas of need for their schools. There has been no directive from the Central Office on what is needed to be completed by the teachers. Teachers should check with their principal to determine any requirements for completing segments and questions. Teachers should also contact Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology, when PD360 is not available (include site and how the program failed). Mr. Parker indicated that this could be an overload issue with the company. He will contact the company representatives to determine issues and what corrections may be made.
17. It was suggested that when flooding occurs, the names of the closed roads be included in the AlertNOW message.

The Superintendent indicated that the road closure information could not be included in any AlertNOW messages. To obtain this information, individuals may contact the Virginia Department of Transportation, call 511 or go to the internet site (VDOT511) to view the roads that are closed. A link will be provided under the school closing link on the Pittsylvania County Schools' website to allow individuals to review the listing of any closed roads.
18. It was suggested that banked time be used for make-up days before taking days away from the school calendar.

This suggestion will be provided to the Calendar Committee for consideration in discussions for the 2010-2011 school calendar. It was noted that banked time does not allow the students to make up the instruction they would have received on a full-day of make-up. The staff wants to keep the integrity of the instructional days. For the 2009-2010 school year, the calendar will be based on 990 instructional hours instead of 180 student days because of the four (4) days that will not be made up. Any additional suggestions for the 2010-2011 school year should be provided to Dr. Lillian Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction.

19. A question was raised about the teachers having to be out of the shops before June. It had been understood that the construction would not begin on the shops until the summer.

The construction and renovations at the high schools are ahead of schedule by approximately three (3) months. The contractors had asked the principals if these shops could be accessed earlier so that renovations could begin. The principals agreed and indicated that the teachers could schedule all of the shop activities earlier in the year. Any questions relative to this schedule should be discussed with the principal.

20. A question was raised about the possibility of donating sick leave days to other employees in need of days.

If there is enough support for this possibility, staff will review policy for any necessary revisions. Issues may arise because the school system would have to pay a substitute for additional days out. When employees retire, they receive \$10.00 per day for any unused sick leave days. These types of circumstances could create an economic dilemma for the school system.

21. A concern was expressed that the Grade Point Average (GPA) is not accessible in PowerSchool.

There was some confusion about the listing of the GPA on the report cards. A secondary teacher indicated that the GPA was not listed on the report card; however, the middle school teachers indicated that the GPA was listed on the report card. Mr. Rickey W. Parker stated that he would discuss this with the IT staff. The report card process will be reviewed to determine the most appropriate time to post GPAs.

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

1. The first meeting of the School Calendar Committee will be on March 4, 2010. This meeting is being held later than in previous years because it was uncertain if the school system would be eligible to request a waiver of the post-Labor Day opening. A request for the waiver will be presented to the School Board at its March 9, 2010, meeting. If approved by the Board, the

request for waiver will be submitted to the State. The Calendar Committee will be working to develop a 2010-2011 school calendar with a pre-Labor Day opening. It was suggested that the 2010-2011 school calendar be similar to the 2009-2010 calendar. Any additional changes or suggestions should be submitted to Dr. Lillian D. Holland for discussion with the Calendar Committee.

2. The Graduate of Merit is a recognition program for students who have excelled in many facets of education. There are 118 students to be recognized for 2010. Sponsors are still needed for the Graduate of Merit students at a cost of \$100.00 each. There are also opportunities for sponsorship of scholarships.
3. A summary of the Fall 2009 Standards of Learning (SOL) tests results were provided. Division-wide, there were 67 perfect scores. As a division, the passing rates were 88% for English, 90% for mathematics and science and 95% for social studies.
4. The 6, 9, 12 and 18 week assessments provide checkpoints for students to determine if additional instruction is necessary. The 6- and 12-week assessment will be given in the elementary schools this spring. It was noted that the Tests for Higher Standards is currently on the list of budget considerations to be cut for 2010-2011.

Dr. Jeffrey B. Early, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, addressed the following issue:

1. Each year the State of Virginia requires school divisions to report the number of students receiving special education services. The results of the December 1 Child Count was provided. The report included a breakdown of disability categories and a trend of how the special education population has changed. There was a slight change in the special education population of 3/10 of a percent from the 2008-2009 school year.

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

1. The high school renovations are ahead of schedule. The auditoriums are completed at Gretna High and Chatham High Schools. All schools will be moving into the classrooms across from the agriculture shops and moving in to the family and consumer science classrooms. During the summer, renovations will be completed on the locker rooms, gymnasiums and some of the hallways. It is anticipated that an open house will be scheduled in the fall. Roofs are currently being completed which has caused some leaks in the schools.

2. The keys for the interior classroom doors at the high schools have not been received as of this date. They should arrive soon.
3. The 2009-2010 budget has been cut \$1.8 million. Textbook money was cut from the budget which was not expected. The State is providing a holiday for VRS rates for the last quarter which has offset the loss in funds for 2009-2010. Governor Kaine's budget cut \$4.6 million from the budget for the 2010-2011 budget. Governor McDonnell has proposed a \$4.5 million cut for 2010-2011 and an additional \$3.5 million for 2011-2012. He has also proposed reducing the VRS rates and life insurance rates that the school system must pay. For State employees (not School Board employees), Governor Kaine proposed a 10 day furlough and State employees paying 5% of VRS rate. These items were not in Governor McDonnell's budget proposal. Information should be received soon from the House and Senate budget proposals. The House and Senate will compromise and develop a final budget.
4. A question was raised about the support of charter schools and how that could affect the school system.

The Superintendent indicated that the school system is good enough to stand up against any private or charter school. It has been requested that the State hold harmless school systems on this issue so that funding support would continue.
5. A question was raised about having enough money to purchase social studies textbooks.

The textbook funds have been cut from the 2009-2010 school year. However, there are funds available in the 2010-2011 school budget. The staff has been instructed to set priorities for the social studies textbooks and to remember that mathematics textbooks must be purchased in the 2010-2011 school year.
6. A question was raised about continuing United Streaming.

The United Streaming program will be available until the end of June, 2010. The company is requesting a check for \$10,500 to continue the program for next year. There are course designs that have been developed for the middle schools (World Connections). It was suggested that an extension be requested to continue this program. The fee to continue should be frozen to allow schools to fund on an individual basis as necessary. Teachers were asked to inform principals that this program needs to be continued. Mr. Rickey W. Parker will obtain a definitive cost for continuing the United Streaming program. This issue will be discussed with the principals at the meeting on March 11, 2010.

In the absence of Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, the Superintendent addressed the following issues:

1. The recruiting schedule for 2009-2010 was provided.
2. The number of anticipated vacancies for the 2010-2011 school year were reviewed. These numbers may continue to increase over the next few weeks.
3. The Behavior Management Taskforce will meet on Thursday, February 25, 2010, to discuss the Student Code of Conduct. Questions were raised about misconduct based on the following situations:
 - a. A student jokingly states that they are going to kill someone. This student is automatically suspended. A student who points their finger acting as if they are shooting may only receive silent lunch. It was indicated that this was a teachable moment. However, verbalization must be addressed because other students are hearing the threat.
 - b. Misconduct for drug possession or distribution – The possession, distribution or use of drugs is addressed separately in the Student Code of Conduct. A student in possession of a prescription drug not prescribed to that student would face disciplinary action. Students must follow protocol in providing any medications to the school office.Any suggestions for changes in this policy should be provided to Mrs. Knight, Mrs. Shari Dudley, Executive Administrative Assistant for Human Resources, and Mrs. Janet F. Hancock, Clerk of the Board.

The Superintendent addressed the following issue:

1. The budget considerations for the 2010-2011 proposed school budget were reviewed. Two (2) critical items need to be reviewed: attrition and removing the 1% salary reduction. It was noted that after the 2010-2011 school year, the stimulus money that has been available to the school system for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years will no longer be available. This reduction could decrease the budget by \$5 million. The next Budget Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, March 4, 2010, at 6:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:19 p.m.