

**MINUTES OF TEACHERS' ADVISORY COUNCIL
PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY SCHOOLS
March 31, 2008**

A meeting of the Teachers' Advisory Council was held on Monday, March 31, 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. Lillian D. Holland, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Mr. Donald R. Johnson, Assistant Superintendent for Business, Mrs. Clarissa T. Knight, Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources, Dr. Jeffrey B. Early, Director of Special Education, and Mrs. Cathlene Scolpini, Lead ITRT. ABSENT: Dr. John W. Amos, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, and Mr. Rickey W. Parker, Assistant Superintendent for Information Technology.

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

The following Council topics were discussed:

1. A question was raised about field trips and absences from school.

A copy of the Request for Approval of Excused Absence for Educational Opportunity form and the Field Trip Permission form was provided. The directors, principals and Dr. John Amos, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, developed the Approval of Excused Absence for Educational Opportunity form to define educational opportunities for activities that are not sponsored by the school. The form should be completed by parents and submitted to the school principal for approval of excused absences. If the student is absent from school, it does affect perfect attendance. The field trip permission form should be completed for all school-sponsored field trips. When students go on school-sponsored field trips, they are not counted absent for the school day. Any unexcused absence may be appealed to the three-member absence review committee at the school. There may be programs that are meeting on the school campus; however, they are not school-sponsored events or activities. A controversy has arisen because a parent sent a student on an educational opportunity that was not a school-sponsored field trip. Discussions are continuing relative to this issue.

A question was raised about perfect attendance. It was noted that some students come in the door throwing up and the parents ask how long they have to stay in order to get their perfect attendance. This issue was discussed last year, and it was discovered that schools were using different methods for perfect attendance. A memo was provided to the principals

relative to the recognition of perfect attendance. The schools have the discretion to impart extraordinary or exemplary attendance as well as perfect attendance.

2. A question was raised about increasing the compensation for accumulated sick leave days at retirement. Currently, retiring employee receive \$10.00 per day for each accumulated sick leave day.

The request to increase the compensation for accumulated sick leave days was not a budget initiative for the 2008-2009 school budget. There was a proposal to increase the compensation to \$25.00 per day in the 2007-2008 budget; however, the proposal was not accepted. This increase has been considered but was not included in the budget for 2008-2009.

3. A concern was expressed about employees being publicly degraded by School Board members (particularly in the Southern end of the County).

Any issues of this type should be addressed with the Superintendent or by writing or contacting the individual's respective School Board member.

4. A request was made to fund elementary art teachers.

There was no budget request to include elementary art teachers for the 2008-2009 school budget. Elementary art teachers may be very hard to recruit, and additional classroom space may be required. The process to include elementary art teachers in the budget proposal should begin with the school principal and a request for a budget initiative.

5. A question was raised relative to the inclusion of an increase in the Master's Degree supplement in the 2008-2009 school budget.

The increase for the Master's Degree supplement to \$2,500.00 is currently included in the 2008-2009 school budget.

6. A question was raised about traffic patterns at Gretna Middle School. Specifically, there are cars driving both ways from the teaching parking lot to where the parents pick up their children. It was noted that there is no signage to indicate this is a one-way route.

The Virginia Department of Transportation has not installed signs. However, this is a one-way route for parents to pick up and drop off students.

7. A question was raised about salaries for teachers at the top of the scale for 2008-2009.

There is a 5% average salary increase included in the budget. The employees at the top of the scale would not receive a step increase which would provide less than a 5% increase for those at the top of the scale.

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

1. Information was provided on the 2008 Graduates of Merit Recognition Banquet. There will be 140 seniors recognized as Graduate of Merit on May 22, 2008, at the Averett Convocation Center, Danville, Virginia. This will be the largest number of recipients to be recognized to date.
2. A copy of the 2008-2009 High School Course Selection Guide was provided. There have been very few changes in the guide from last year. Copies of this guide will be provided to each of the high schools and eighth grade students.
3. The Instruction and Information Technology departments have been working together to investigate another type of instrument to be used for benchmark testing. A pilot program has been implemented at the Chatham and Dan River Middle Schools this year to determine the feasibility of continuing the use of this software. This software allows teachers to create tests and analyze test results. A survey will also be provided relative to the Tests for Higher Standards to determine how much and if these tests are being used. Currently, the school system pays an annual subscription rate for the use of the Tests for Higher Standards. The feasibility of continuing this subscription will be determined using the results of the survey and other input.
4. There will not be a 2008 Summer Institute. However, opportunities for professional development will be offered through the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, Radford University and workshops sponsored by the school division. Informational flyers will be distributed in May.

Dr. Jeff Early, Director of Special Education, addressed the following items:

1. Sammye W. Shelton Field Day for students with disabilities will be held on May 23, 2008, at the Hatcher Center, Blairs, Virginia. The rain date is scheduled for May 28, 2008.
2. The Behavior Management Taskforce has reviewed the Student Code of Conduct. No changes were proposed by the General Assembly this year; therefore, there are no changes in the Student Code of Conduct.

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

1. A copy of the 2008-2009 budget proposal was provided. This budget proposal was approved by the School Board at its March 20, 2008, called meeting. The budget totaling approximately \$89.5 million includes an \$8.3 million increase over the 2007-2008 budget. The 2008-2009 budget has been submitted to the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors. The budget passed by the General Assembly included no specific money earmarked for salary increases for 2008-2009; however, because of rebenchmarking, there is sufficient money for salary increase. The money included in the biennium budget includes a 2% salary increase beginning July 1, 2009. Also included in the budget is an increase in pre-school money. Representatives were encouraged to attend the Board of Supervisors' public hearing on the budget on March 31, 2008. There is a possibility that the Board of Supervisors may cut the school budget by \$200,000 - \$300,000 less than the amount provided to the school system last year because of the additional funds expected from the State.

A question was raised relative to the affect of lottery money.

The lottery funds are included in the State funds listed in the budget. The school system receives \$1.6 million in funding from the lottery. The school system uses one-half of these funds for operating expenses and the remaining is used to help pay the annual costs for the middle school bonds.

2. Chatham Elementary School will have six (6) new classrooms for next year. Bids have been received for this addition, and Daniel Builders, Danville, Virginia, received the bid. The cost will be approximately \$1 million for this addition. For the high school renovations, the architects will be meeting with specialized area teachers (agriculture, industrial arts, library and band) to develop design schemes for these areas. It is anticipated that bids will be received in October. It was noted that bids for the Chatham Elementary School additions were considerably lower in price than those received for the previous construction. It is hoped that the high school renovations bids will also be lower.

Mrs. Cathlene Scolpini, Lead ITRT, addressed the following items:

1. The Division Technology Committee meeting will be held on Monday, April 7, 2008. Topics of discussion will include Internet Safety Education, proposed changes to the e-mail system, improvements in the student login procedures and I-Prism reporting and instructional technology.
2. The school system currently uses the Microsoft Exchange Server for e-mail. The Information Technology department is considering the possibility of using a Google e-mail system. This system would significantly increase the

limit for e-mail. Training would be provided if the new system is implemented.

3. The Information Technology department is working on the process of setting up individual logins for high school students (and possibly middle school students) for the 2008-2009 school year. This will allow students to access their own documents from various computers and help the school system to track usage through the I-Prism program. Students should be reminded that their login should not be shared. Additional information will be provided.
4. Blackboard will still be available for the 2008-2009 school year. Projectors have been installed at the elementary and middle schools. If any teacher was anticipating the receipt of a projector and has not received it, please contact Mrs. Scolpini. State technology funds are received; however, these funds cannot be used to purchase specific items.

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

1. A listing of employment vacancies for 2007-2008 and anticipated vacancies for 2008-2009 was provided. Currently, interviews are being conducted for six (6) administrative positions for 2008-2009. It is anticipated that recommendations for these positions will be announced at the April School Board meeting.
2. A copy of the recruitment schedule was provided. Principals are interested in hiring qualified individuals who have attended schools in the Commonwealth.
3. An e-mail was received from a group of teachers expressing concern about the way teachers were being evaluated relative to absences. After discussion at the December Teachers' Advisory Council meeting, the issue was addressed with the principals. Based on these discussions, the following proposed change has been added to the teacher evaluation instrument under "Observing the Regular Contract Day:"
 - Avoids excessive absences (approved leaves of absences should not be considered)This proposed change will be presented to the School Board at its April 8, 2008, meeting for approval. Any comments about this proposal should be provided to Mrs. Knight.

The Superintendent addressed the following item:

1. A meeting was held with Sheriff Mike Taylor to discuss the idea of Law Enforcement Appreciation Week to recognize town police, State police, County deputies and investigators. The week of April 14-18, 2008, has been designated as Law Enforcement Appreciation Week. The significance of this

week is that this would be the same timeframe of the events that occurred at Ruby Ridge, Waco, Columbine and Virginia Tech. Last year, during this same week, rumors were spread about things that were happening at Gretna Middle School. This created fear in the students, parents and staff with a total disruption of the school day. During the week of April 14-18, 2008, law enforcement officials will be invited to come into the schools for refreshments or lunch (our treat). An AlertNOW message will be launched from the Superintendent to the parents to make them aware of the events of this week. It was suggested that this information be placed on the school marquee noting Law Enforcement Appreciation Week and to have student ambassadors to lead tours of the schools. It was also suggested that the school system continue to provide free lunch to law enforcement officials. In previous years, Chatham High School implemented a program to invite parents and citizens of the week to visit the school for a brief tour and provided lunch to them at the expense of the school. Other schools may wish to consider similar types of activities.

2. One of the sheriff's deputies is seeking a grant to employ more school resource officers. This has also been discussed with area legislators; however, there has been no additional funding made available.

On consensus of the Teachers' Advisory Council Representatives, there will not be a meeting in June. On behalf of the School Board and the Central Office staff, the Superintendent expressed appreciation to the Council representatives for their service on the Council and their invaluable input.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:08 p.m.